Rebuilding from the Ruins – Images of Greece by Eugène Delacroix

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for Doctor of Philosophy

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Flinders University, Adelaide, South Australia

November 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

This thesis brings together nineteenth-century Greek history, French art and French politics, and develops a narrative around four paintings about Greece by the French artist Ferdinand-Victor Eugène Delacroix (1798 – 1863). The four paintings represent pivotal moments in Greek history. The first two paintings, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* (1824), and *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* (1826) represent the drama and violence of Greek war of independence that broke out in 1821. Regarding the last two paintings; *Medea Pursued and about to kill her Children* (1838) represents the classical period of Greek antiquity, and the *Crusaders Entering Constantinople* (1840 – 41) represents the Byzantine era.

The thesis evolved around the life and times of Delacroix, his early bereavements, his early struggles with poverty, and his efforts to define himself as an artist and a thinker. His copious letters and Journals reveal an individual of extraordinary abilities, unique talent and powerful vision.

He never travelled to Greece, but his imagination and thorough research into the background of his subjects enabled him to produce archetypal and diachronic images associated with Greece. He seemed able to represent events related to aspects of Greek history believably and compassionately. It is likely that his capacity for empathy was the result of his own suffering. The series of 'amputations'(in the words of Réne Huyghe), he experienced, such as the deaths of his father, brother and mother, by the time he was sixteen years of age, as well as the public speculations regarding his illegitimacy, affected him deeply. He suffered from chronic ill health that worsened over time until, in the last few years of his life, it made him a virtual recluse.

He was ambivalent about the tensions in the art world, and not prepared to be associated closely either with the classicists or the romantics. The individuality of his painting, his brilliant colour, and his 'lack of finish', set him apart from other artists, as did his loyalty to the artists and movements of the past. As an interpreter of the chaos, destructiveness and radical transformations of his time, intellectually and emotionally, he is probably unrivalled.

This is the first time such a narrative associating Greece, French art, and four paintings about Greece by Eugène Delacroix, has been attempted, and in the course of this study, new information emerged regarding the artist's engagement with Greek themes. Furthermore, it revealed the tragectory of an exceptional artist who was able, not only to transform the art of his time but also to shape the future evolution of European art, by dramatising the experience of a trans - forming light.

The four "Greek" abovementioned paintings reveal Delacroix's dealings with tensions and ambivalences which transcend all sorts of isms (like romanticism, classicism, neo-classicism, modernism), elevating him to the status of leading artist of the 19th century, and in the *avant-garde* of the 20th century.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Areti Devetzidis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the following individuals without whom this thesis would not have been possible.

I would like to thank my primary supervisor, Professor Michael Tsianikas whose deep knowledge of Greek and French language, literature and culture, his passion for and understanding of visual art, and his extensive experience in writing and publishing, stimulated and inspired me often over the course of writing the thesis.

I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Dr Colette Mrowa-Hopkins for her support and encouragement.

I would also like to Thank Dr George Couvalis, who generously shared his extensive knowledge and understanding of Classical Greek history with me in the early stage of my thesis.

I would like to acknowledge the generous encouragement and support I received from Maria Palaktsoglou and Andonis Litinas of the Modern Greek Department, and to thank them for sharing their experience and knowledge with me.

I would like to thank Dr Diane Brown for copyediting my thesis in accordance with the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* (2nd edition, 2013) and national university guidelines.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my partner Dr M. Christine Brown, whose enthusiastic support, her pride in my endeavour, her intelligent suggestions and advice and generous counsel helped me overcome my many doubts and misgivings as I progressed through this thrilling and fearsome task to the end.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates the relationship between French political history, Modern Greek history, and the French artist Ferdinand-Victor Eugène Delacroix, who was born April 26th 1798 at Saint-Maurice-en-Charenton and who died August 13th 1863, Paris France. It examines the impact of the Greek War of Independence on French art and culture within the context of a widespread classical Hellenic revival movement, also known as the neo-classical revival.

Four paintings about Greece by Eugène Delacroix, which he produced from 1824 -1841, provide the framework for the investigation.

These four paintings each represent major events in Greek history. The Greek war of independence (1821 – 1827) inspired two of the paintings, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* (1824), and *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* (1826). Delacroix painted these two works during the most violent period of the revolution 1824 – 1826, while the European, world was transfixed by the events of the war, and avidly followed newspaper accounts of its progress. Delacroix painted the other two paintings, *Medea Pursued and about to kill her Children* (1838) and *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* (1840) after the Greek war of independence ended and the Greeks had begun establishing a small county of their own for the first time in four hundred years. These two paintings refer to two other pivotal moments in Greek history with Medea representing classical Greek achievement, and the Crusaders Entering Constantinople representing the last Great Greek speaking empire.

These four works, depicting episodes in Greek history from antiquity to the present, through the artist's eyes, are works that derive directly from the imagination of the artist. Other works of art Delacroix produced on Greek themes tended to relate to his fascination with orientalism. An important example is the series of paintings based on Lord Byron's poem, *The Giaour, a Fragment of a Turkish Tale* first published in 1813. These works are entirely imaginative and allegorical but not based on any real events. On the other hand, the four paintings selected for this thesis provide a panorama of Greek history based on major historical events, which were created in Delacroix's changing painting styles over time. The stages of the artistic evolution of the artist himself reflected

in the differing styles depicting the four works. These stylistic variations are discussed in more detail in the four chapters on each individual painting.

Delacroix painted these four paintings amidst widespread violence and social upheaval throughout Europe and in particular among diaspora and occupied Greeks. Themes of violence and social upheaval permeate the subjects of these four painting and indeed violence provides the backdrop against which European art was art was also changing.

The relationship between violence and social and political change led to the emergence of two powerful political factions that emerged in France. These two political factions called the liberals[1] and conservatives respectively, demonstrated diametrically opposed responses to change. On the one hand, the liberals welcomed and embraced change, but on the other hand, the conservatives resisted and rejected change. The political polarization of France in the post-revolutionary period however, is but one illustration of the eternal social struggle between change and stability throughout history.

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The kind of duality, or factionalism that emerged in France was a widespread phenomenon, applicable to the political instabilities and social conflicts in France and Greece respectively, from the late eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century.

The main cause of these social divisions was the French Revolution, with its radical Enlightenment agenda overturning established custom and practice and introducing ongoing instability and change in France. The leaders of the French revolution, having all been all nurtured on a classical education, wanted to recreate French political systems, architecture and lifestyle "in imitation of ancient Greece and Rome."[2]

When the Greek War of Independence broke out in 1821, European attention focused on a society that had been occupied by and submerged under Ottoman rule for over four hundred years. With Hellenic revival fervor already established in France, the powerful symbolism and drama of the

[1] The term liberal as it applies here represents the liberal faction in France in the early nineteenth century that opposed the extreme conservatism of the restored Bourbon Monarchy, which aimed to return France to the pre-revolutionary past and to erase all changes that happened after it.
[2] Alfred Cobban 1963 *A History of Modern France Volume 1: Old Regime and Revolution 1715 – 1799* penguin Books Ltd. UK page 20

Greek Revolution ignited French and indeed European idealism in relation to Greece. The French were particularly susceptible to the notion of a crusade to rescue Greece from Islam, because it highlighted French pride in their significant role in the Crusades of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and enhanced their current growing nationalism. This led them to explore their cultural and familial roots in connection with the crusaders[3]. They were hoping to gain glory through their connections to the crusading heroes of the past.

War, escalating political unrest, revolution and repressive governments are the context for these paintings. The thesis title, however, *Rebuilding from the Ruins – Images of Greece by Eugène Delacroix*, while referring to the consequences of war also highlights the journey from destruction to transformation and freedom for the Greek people after four centuries of occupation. While this was going on however, Delacroix was steadily building his artistic career by appropriating not only from the 'ruins' of historical and social disasters but also from the 'ruins' of centuries of art.

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This thesis also traces the ideological conflict over style in French art that broke out between the classicists and romantics in 1824. These debates and divisions over style have a long history. For instance there was the 'quarrel between the ancients and the moderns', which was also described as the battle between the Poussinists and the Rubenists, that endured from the late Renaissance onward and later metamorphosed into the struggle between the classicists and the romantics in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The late art historian, Francis Haskell defined these conflicts as "the great and ceaseless war between the colourists and the draughtsmen."[4]

In *Rococo to Revolution Major Trends in Eighteenth Century Painting* Michael Levey elaborates on this issue by explaining the moral and gender implications in painting associated with the application of colour or line. He refers to the most prominent past colourists—among them, Michelangelo and Rubens—who were regarded as heretics by the followers of Poussin and

[3] Jonathan Riley-Smith 2002 The Oxford History of the Crusades Oxford University Press UK page 371
[4] Francis Haskell, 1987 *Past and Present in Art and Taste – Selected Essays* Yale University Press, UK, p. 67.

Raphael, because the seductiveness (femaleness) of colour implied lack of decorum."[5]

There were endless debates regarding the 'right kind of painting.' Levey referred to comments by the Earl of Shaftsbury, who explained in 1713 that the right type of painting "…was of an elevated masculine kind in subject as well as treatment. It was based on nature and true to human passions, but it observed truth of art, propriety and morality and in its highest manifestations was historical rather than merely natural."[6] Shaftsbury's definition of the right type of art identified the essential characteristics of neoclassical painting.[7] Neo-classicism is a 'masculine' style that relied on detailed drawing and precise definition of form using clear, sharp lines to delineate it. These images were images of propriety and morality. Their muted colours, applied in smooth layers of glazes, without a hint of brush marks remaining. This provides a useful description of neoclassical characteristics in painting that emerged in the mid eighteenth century.

As circumstances changed however, so did taste. The social conditions that gave rise to a certain style can render it less relevant under new conditions. As one style faded, another took its place, except under the circumstances where the freedom of artistic expression came into conflict with political necessity. This happened in relation to the rise of romanticism around 1817. The neoclassical revival had been the signature style of the Revolution and of the Napoleonic Empire and adopted by the Bourbon Restoration as the style that represented them too. They had observed its powerful propaganda value, exploited its references to antiquity, and co-opted the political and moral values of antiquity for their own purpose, but by then artists of that generation, like Eugène Delacroix had moved on from academic classicism and turned to manifestations of romanticism.

The romantics did not worship the heroes of antiquity nor did they deify kings. Delacroix, Géricault and others of their cohort instead explored their own inner worlds and identities, having been sickened by the ongoing violence such as the unceasing political power struggles, and the conflict between conservative values and freedom of expression, and the tensions between returning to

[5] Michael Levey, 1966 *Rococo to Revolution: Major Trends in Eighteenth-Century* Painting Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, p. 121.
[6] Ibid page 121
[7] Neo-classicism is a term in use today but was not the name of the style during this period. Instead, eighteenth and nineteenth century artists and writers simply called it the true style.

the past and moving towards the future.

The leading classicist at the time, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, articulated his own anxiety about change and the likelihood that change would mean more losses than gains. He asserted that classical Greeks had achieved perfection in art and all that art required from modern artists was to imitate the Greeks. He told his students:

> "Let me hear no more of that absurd maxim: 'We need the new, we need to follow our century, everything changes, everything is changed.' Sophistry – all of that! Does nature change, do the light and air change, have the passions of the human heart changed since the time of Homer? 'We must follow our century': but suppose my century is wrong?"[8]

Ingres heartfelt cry reveals the depth of passion engendered by the battle of the styles between the classicists and the romantics in the first half of the nineteenth century. This passionate battle between artists was in reality though, more than conflict over styles. In this thesis, the tensions between classicism and romanticism became a metaphor for the battle of ideas and values, between the status quo and change.

Ingres believed that nothing new could equal the perfection of ancient Greece. He did not believe change was necessarily a good thing, and his doubts may have been reasonable. Change is never one thing. It is never all good or all bad. Change is often unpredictable, it comes with benefits and disadvantages, and these are not always easy to assess beforehand, especially when widespread uncontrollable change dominates.

Social and political change affected everyone so it is quite likely to affect art. Therefore, we will look at the four principle paintings in this thesis, for the effect of social change on art by considering it in its most obvious form, its subject matter and style.

The Four Paintings

As stated above, the four paintings about Greece by Eugène Delacroix relate to significant episodes in Greek history, and they tell the diverse and dramatically changing story of Greece, and different aspects of Greek identity, through the last two millennia. The following comments aim to introduce each painting and mention their main points. Each painting has a chapter dedicated to it

[8] Joshua C. Taylor (ed.) 1987 *Nineteenth-Century Theories of Art* University of California Press, USA, p. 118.

with a detailed visual analysis and a discussion of its history. The following comments refer to each painting in terms of the chronology of the subject matter and not the date on of its creation, beginning with the earliest period – the classical period of Greek antiquity. The painting associated with this period is *Medea Pursued and about to kill her Children* (1838) based on Euripides tragedy, *Medea*, which he composed at the height of classical antiquity. Delacroix did this painting at the age of forty. His reputation as a significant artist by then was well established. *Medea*, one of the greatest figures in Greek tragedy, here personifies Classical Greece. She embodies the elements of tragedy and drama, good and evil, life and death, love and hate. She also represents the 'other', the dark, wild, untamed, barbaric Asian side of Greece.

From around 300 CE until 1453, the Eastern Roman Empire/Byzantine Empire was a great, medieval, Greek-speaking empire that lasted for over one thousand years. The empire shaped western Christianity, had a profound impact on European art, and maintained the Greek language. Ultimately though, struggling to resist the impact of waves of Turkish tribes from the east, and the debilitating effects on it of a succession of Crusades from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries it became so weak that the fourth Crusade was able to conquer and occupy Constantinople in 1204.

The Sack of Constantinople by fourth crusade is the subject of the last painting, The *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* (1840–41), depicts the 1204 occupation of Constantinople by the knights of the fourth Crusade. They established the short lived Latin Empire in the East. The king, Louis-Philippe, commissioned this painting in 1838 for the salon of the crusaders in the palace of Versailles.

Crusaders Entering Constantinople tells the story of the deteriorating relationship between East and West. The Eastern and Western churches had split decisively and acrimoniously in 1064. Unfortunately the Byzantine Empire was under constant attack and so when the Turks reached the Bosphorus in 1095, the Emperor Alexius 1st sent an embassy to Pope Urban 11th, to ask for help against the Turks.[9] The First Crusade thus came into being. Subsequent Crusades were not as successful for the Christians.

This painting shows a parade of victorious, but not necessarily elated, cavalry of crusaders

[9] Jonathan Riley-Smith, 2005 *The Crusades: A History* (2nd edn.) Yale University Press, USA, p.1.

entering Constantinople. The landscape, rendered in moody tones, with the victors in shadow and the victims covered in light, seems to foretell the forthcoming destruction of the Byzantine Empire and the long subjugation of the Greeks by the Turks.

The Turkish occupation of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 pushed the Greeks into a dark age for over four hundred years. When the Ottoman Empire began to falter in the eighteenth century, a secret society, the *Filiki Eteria*, formed a movement to free Greece from Ottoman occupation and led to the outbreak of the Greek War of independence in 1821.

The next two paintings, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* (1824) and *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* (1826), represent the Greek War of Independence (1821 – 1827), depicting two of the most significant episodes in the Greek War of Independence. *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios,* was the first major painting about the Greek War of independence by Delacroix. The event that inspired this painting took place in 1822, about a year after the initial outbreak of the war. In 1821, the first year of the Greek War of Independence, the Greek insurgents had the upper hand and went on a rampage of killing Turks throughout Greece, but in 1822 the tables were turned and the Sultan retaliated with genocidal fury. His forces indulged in weeks of slaughter of Greeks on the Islands of Chios and Psara and decimated their populations. They executed the men in droves, beginning with the execution of the Orthodox patriarch Grigorios, and sent the woman to the slave markets. They massacred thousands of innocent civilians in retaliation for the outbreak of the war.

The other painting represents the capture of Messolonghi in 1826 by Egyptian forces, after three years of siege. Messolonghi has the distinction of being the place where Lord Byron died in 1814, an event that concentrated world attention on the place and inspired a massive surge of philhellenic fervor, particularly in France and Britain.

After the fall of Messolonghi, however, the Greek insurrection was on the verge of utter defeat. The situation compelled the European allies to come to the aid of Greece, and they succeeded in defeating the Egyptian forces at the battle of Navarino in 1827.

Violence

Violence dominates the four paintings. Delacroix, the reluctant romantic, explored extreme violence, through the creation of these paintings, which never allow us to forget the scale of the

human cost. The society of Chios endured enormous and sustained damage from the slaughter of tens of thousands of civilians by Turkish troops in 1822. The town of Messolonghi, captured after years of siege, retains the legacy of the valiant but failed escape of thousands of Greek residents. Nevertheless, thousands of women, children, the elderly and the sick, chose martyrdom by being blown-up with the arms cache rather than to be captured by Egyptian and Turkish forces. Medea betrayed by her husband, and forced into exile, kills her children. The knights of the Fourth Crusade sacked Constantinople, desecrated holy places, pillaged it and occupied it for sixty years in a demonstration of contempt for Greek religion and culture.

Delacroix painted carnage. Almost his entire oeuvre drips with blood[10], but it is not difficult to see that his fascination with violence and destruction was the inevitable consequence of a lifetime living with constant war and social unrest. He was born during the final stages of the French Revolution. Throughout his childhood and youth, France was constantly at war. His brother Henri died in battle, and a series of wars accompanied the rise and fall of Napoleon. They did not cease even after Napoleon's ultimate defeat in 1815, when the Bourbon monarchy took the throne for the second time.

Even so, social unrest was never far away. There was a revolution in 1830, another in 1834 and a major revolution in 1848. During this period, France and indeed the world changed forever. France was a bitterly divided country, torn between liberalism and conservatism. The French art world inevitably mirrored the social and political extremes playing out around them with their own passionately partisan stylistic disputes over classicism and romanticism.

Personality

Stendhal's maxim, "Neglect nothing that can make you great," was appropriate advice for such an ambitious and talented person as Eugène Delacroix. He possessed a strong work ethic, an intense drive to achieve and to succeed, and he attended to everything that would promote his career. He was an idealistic and sophisticated artist with great faith in his own abilities. Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle) was an influential figure in Delacroix's life, but the relationship took time to form because Stendhal was a classicist, and no fan of Delacroix's painting. Probably the thing that

[10] See Mario Praz, 1970 *The Romantic Agony* Oxford University Press, GB, p.141.

united them was that they both believed in professional integrity above all else.

This Stendhal demonstrated in his review of the Salon of 1824, in which Delacroix's '*Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*…' hung. He wrote that he could not admire the painting, but acknowledged Delacroix's commitment to his own vision: "M. Delacroix always has the immense advantage over all other artists exhibiting large pictures, of having attracted great attention from the public. This is worth more than the eulogies of three or four reactionary newspapers, who parody the latest ideas because they cannot refute them."[11] Stendhal could see that the immensely hostile public reaction towards the painting related to public discomfort with the originality and passion of his work. He acknowledged that this, to him unpleasant painting, represented the refutation of current artistic conventions, pointing to something new but not necessarily beautiful. He could not therefore dismiss it out of hand, as some of the most hostile critics did. Stendhal again demonstrated his perspicacity and objectivity as a critic. In 1827, in his review of the *Death of Sardanapalus* Stendhal praised the character of Delacroix: "It is courage that has won a special place in the public esteem for this young [De] Lacroix, who makes mistakes, but who at least dares to be himself, even at the risk of being nothing at all, not even an academician."[12]

This scathing comment about academicians by Stendhal highlights the deep flaws that had developed in the academy. In the 1820s, the Academy, controlled French art, and its insistence on artistic adherence to neoclassicism, stifled artistic freedom in the post-revolutionary post Napoleonic era. Neoclassicism had lost its relevance and meaning, but artists who wanted to succeed had to adhere to neoclassical principles in their paintings in order to be eligible to compete for the Prix de Rome (a kind of scholarship to study in Rome). Without training in Rome, artists would not gain important commissions or become members of the academy.

Nevertheless, neither Delacroix nor Géricault competed for the Prix de Rome. Delacroix in fact never went to Rome. Géricault however, after several unsuccessful attempts competing for the Grand Prix de Rome prize, "fell back on his own resources and made the rounds of Florence, Rome and Naples throwing himself into a new discipline of classical drawing and command of the nude…[and returned to Paris after a year] with a command of classical drawing that

[11] Ibid, David Wakefield:107-108.
[12] David Wakefield (ed.) 1973 *Stendhal and the Arts:* Phaidon Publishers, USA, p.147.

was…astonishing".[13]

The interesting point to note here is that neither Géricault nor Delacroix received the rigourous classical training of other ambitious artists at the time. Despite Géricault's sojourn in Rome, he found his own teachers and did not stay in Rome longer than a year. Other artists often spent years studying to achieve a high level of polish in their art. It was apparent however, that Géricault and Delacroix, without the kind of lengthy and highly disciplined training, were consequently freer in their interpretation of form, and both used colour luxuriously and expressively like their most admired artists. It is interesting to note here that both Delacroix and Géricault were ultimately the artists who made the greatest impact on succeeding generations of artists.

Stendhal's remarks, mentioned previously, indicated that he perceived something important in Delacroix's art, even if it did not appeal to him, while Delacroix's letter thanking him for his review showed gratitude and humility for Stendhal's insight: "I have read the article in the *Revue de Paris*. It seems to me to be extremely good and fair, quite apart from the kind things you said about myself, for which I thank you."[14] Stendhal's insights on Delacroix's career were quite prophetic. Nevertheless, Delacroix's individuality, his adherence to his own vision and his imagination ultimately prevented him from gaining the formal public acknowledgment the status of an academician would have given him.

He had a strong desire for official recognition, described by Alan Spitzer as his "…response to the deeply rooted French tradition of honorific membership in public institutions as the certification of status."[15] It is a feature of his personality that seems to contradict his reputation as a revolutionary painter but in truth, he valued established social conventions highly. Despite Delacroix's early and consistent success, the conservative establishment of the Academy of Fine Arts resisted giving him the recognition he deserved. Delacroix applied seven times for the vacant chair in the Académie des Beaux-Arts from 1832 until 1857 and endured a series of "humiliating rejections",[16] until he was awarded the chair at the age of fifty-nine, six years before his death.

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[13] Thomas Crow, 1995 *Emulation: David Drouais, and Girodet In the Art of Revolutionary France* Yale University Press, USA, pp.287-88.
[14] Jean Stewart (editor and translator), 1970 *Selected Letters 1813–1863* ArtWorks MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA, p.117.
[15] Alan B.Spitzer 'Delacroix and his Generation' in Beth Wright (ed.) 2001*The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* p. 16.
[16] Ibid, p.15.

Delacroix's obsession with originality came from his belief that imagination, combined with the close observation of nature and the use of colour. He believed it was essential to the representation of nature, and that the kind of truth about nature that he sought, came from the imagination and not from slavish imitation of the object. These attitudes prevented him from slavishly imitating anything, especially the classicism of other artists, and most likely stood in the way of official recognition. Charles Baudelaire, poet, art critic and devoted admirer of Delacroix, was a prolific writer on his art and ideas. He described Delacroix as someone who was "passionately in love with passion and coldly determined to seek the means of expressing it in the most visible way"[17], writing perhaps the best summary of Delacroix's approach to imagination and painting. He describes Delacroix's complex interpretation of the interaction of the human faculties, sight, imagination, observation and skill: "Since I consider the impression transmitted to the artist by nature as the most important thing for him to translate, is it not essential that he should be armed in advance with all the most rapid means of translation? It is evident that in his eyes the imagination was the most precious gift. The most important faculty, but that this faculty remained impotent and sterile if it was not served by a resourceful skill which could follow it in its restless and tyrannical whims. He certainly had no need to stir the fire of his incandescent imagination; but the day was never long enough for his study of the material means of expression. It was this never-ceasing preoccupation that seems to explain his endless investigations of colour and quality of colours, his lively interest in matters of chemistry, and his conversations with manufacturers of colours. In that respect he comes close to Leonardo da Vinci, who was no less a victim of the same obsessions."[18] Baudelaire also wrote: "Eugène Delacroix loved everything, knew how to paint everything and knew how to enjoy all sorts of talents. He was a mind most open to all ideas and impressions, the most eclectic and impartial sensualist".[19] He was "A volcanic crater artistically concealed beneath a bouquet of flowers."[20]

Delacroix was passionate about all the arts, music, theatre, poetry and literature as well as painting. He believed that Mozart was the greatest musician of all but he was very familiar with the

[17] Charles Baudelair, 1964 *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* Phaidon Press Ltd., London, UK, p.46.
[18] Ibid, pps. 46, 47.
[19] Charles Baudelaire in Barthélémy Jobert, *Delacroix* (1997), p. 40.
[20] Charles Baudelaire in René Huyghe (1963), p. 12.

music of Chopin with whom he had a close relationship. He even bought a piano and installed it in his studio for Chopin to play while he painted. He was an avid consumer of culture, attending as many cultural events, exhibitions, opera, theatre and music that he could. He wrote enthusiastically in his journal on 12 October 1822, "Just returned from *The Marriage of Figaro*, full of the most heavenly sensations." On 19 March 1824, he described his visits to the museum and the works of art he was studying there. "Splendid day at the Louvre with Edouard. The Poussins! The Rubens! And above all, Titian's *Francis1* Velazquez!". On 11 April he exclaimed: "Came home early, very much pleased with myself for copying the Velazquez and full of enthusiasm."[21] Delacroix's wit, elegance and erudition made him a highly sought after guest at the salons of the cultural elite of Paris. Barthélémy Jobert, for example, refers to his "fiery spirit and audacity, his elegance and pride, his class consciousness, his man of the world and grand bourgeois persona."[22]

He was passionate about art and he was also very careful in his observation of social standards, whence his pursuit of official recognition arose, but it did not make him a slave to convention. It appears, however, that there are two sides to Delacroix's personality: the debonair, correct, well-groomed, suave and sophisticated man about town, present at all the right places, seen with all the right people, articulate, and well read, and world weary, somewhat socially remote, withdrawn, secretive, and an emotional romantic, prone to ennui and ill health.

He had a capacity for both rigorous reasoning and for intense emotion, an enquiring mind and a deep respect for social mores. He was elegant, sophisticated and passionate about art, music and literature. René Huyghe wrote that Delacroix possessed "an innate love of correctness, and a longing for public acceptance. That he conformed, without enthusiasm to the rites of social life with the discipline of a man of the world."[23]

Rene Huyghe attributed the dark, tortured side of his personality to his early bereavements and losses. He described them as the "series of implacable amputations which Delacroix, [suffering] them so early in life permanently injured his sensibility so that it withdrew into itself and ceased to

[21] It was common practice for artists and students to set up in the Louvre (with permission) and copy the works of art there. Delacroix was tireless in his pursuit of excellence in painting and copied works of the Masters frequently.
[22] Barthélémy Jobert 1997:18-19.
[23] René Huyghe 1963:8.

be trusting and expansive".[24] Delacroix's youthful bereavements,[25] the loss of both his father and mother in childhood and youth is always a traumatic and life changing experience, making Huyghe's metaphor "amputations" powerfully relevant, evoking the disabling effect of the kind of losses that leave a child feeling helpless and powerless.

Delacroix also possessed a strong capacity for empathy. Perhaps it too came from his experience of profound loss and grief, which he could turn into something positive. This he demonstrated in his identification with the Greek cause, with his passionate philhellenism and his ability to generate images of enduring power and pathos, such as his controversial masterpiece, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* (1824).

Frank Anderson Trapp reflects on Huyghe's explanation of the reclusive and mistrustful side of Delacroix's personality in his own description: "His personality is elusive now, as in his own lifetime. The focus of his life was inward, its drama locked inside his own consciousness, and while he had much in common with his contemporaries of all persuasions, he was essentially an isolated and atypical figure. His individualism reflected his special talent, with all its strengths and limitations, not his rebellion. It was his intention to restore, not destroy, the values he inherited".[26] One of the earliest entries in his journal for 8 October 1822 revealed his sense of destiny and the painful fate that awaits him: "…I shall be the herald of those who do great things. There is something in me that is stronger than my body, which is often given new heart by it. In some people, this inner power seems almost non-existent, but with me, it is greater than physical strength. Without it I should die, but in the end it will burn me up – I suppose I mean my imagination that dominates me and drives me on."[27] His early prophetic sense of what awaited him seemed to foretell his lifelong suffering from chronic ill health, the result of the incremental development of the tubercular throat infection with chronic laryngitis and pulmonary congestion that dogged him all his life.

[24] Ibid, pp. 18-19.
[25] Eugene Delacroix's father died when he was seven years old and his twenty-one-year-old brother Henri was killed in battle when Delacroix was nine years old.
[26] Frank Anderson Trapp 1970: xviii.
[27] Wellington 1995:6.

Delacroix's career and achievements

Eugène Delacroix completed his education and embarked on his professional career as a painter in 1822, well into the reign of the Louis XVIII. As the preceding chapters of this thesis reveal, he continued to paint prolifically, becoming one of the one of the most important painters in France. In recognition of his achievements, both government and private patrons gave him major decorative commissions. The last three decades of his life (from 1833 to 1863) were largely dedicated to the execution of large-scale public commissions, beginning with his "first large-scale mural decorations, the Salon du Roi,(1833 – 37), and the murals in the library in the Palais-Bourbon (1838 -1847."[28] His execution of these monumental works, now regarded by art historians as his best works, did not prevent him from producing many splendid easel paintings as well. He submitted works to the Salon jury for every exhibition and most of his paintings were accepted and hung in every Salon throughout his professional life from 1822 to 1863.

Experiencing/Experimenting with Romanticism

Artists had begun to turn away from the ongoing socio and political tensions around 1815, when the Bourbon Monarchy took power. They were turning away from the rigid orthodoxies of neo-classicism with its emphasis on nationalism and patriotism. Turning inward, they examined their individual selves their imagination, emotions and the non-rational world. They wanted to turn away from the turmoil of their own times and to connect themselves to a period in history they perceived to be innocent, and natural[29], a period that predated the rationalism and classicism of the Enlightenment, the excesses of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire.

Enlightenment thinkers had placed great store on science and the universal law of physics but the romantics rejected notions that limited the creativity and uniqueness of their individual perceptions to a set of general laws. They pursued medieval imagery and narrative in their quest to return to an image of the past that was more appealing to the emotions and senses. The quest led to a desire

[28] Barthélemy Jobert *Delacroix* (1997) Princeton University Press, USA, page 178. His other great decorative projects included the Library of the Chambre des Pairs in the Palais du Luxembourg (1841–1846), *The Lamentation* in Saint Denis-du-Saint-Sacrement (1843–1844), the ceiling in the Louvre's Galerie d'Apollon (1850–1851), the Salon de la Paix in the Hotel de Ville de Paris (1852–1854), and the Chapelle des Saintes-Anges in Saint-Sulpice (1849–1861).

[29] The Middle Ages until the late thirteenth century did in fact experience an era of prosperity, stability, and religious stability, which were the features that possibly nurtured the utopian view of the medieval period held by Romantics in the early nineteenth century. However the peace, prosperity and stability and healthy population growth of the middle ages was followed by the crisis of the fourteenth century, with widespread crop failures, bubonic plague, economic hardship, spectacular population decline, protracted wars and instability, and loss of faith in the church.

for spiritual fulfilment and for an enduring and consistent heritage. The reaction to the upheavals and the anti-religious stance of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras was a quest for stability and permanence.

The romantics felt less interest in patriotism and the sacrifice of self for the state, which had been sentiments widely promoted during the Revolution, and the Republic and war-saturated Napoleonic period. Such sentiments were no longer appealing, and artists turned their minds to what they imagined to be a glorious and purer past, one that dovetailed with the preoccupations of romantics. Writers sought folk tales and native mythologies that could connect the present to the past and provide people with a sense of cultural richness, continuity and permanence, and a dream of medieval social harmony. There was increasing identification with the perceived mysticism and spirituality of the medieval past, exploring their individual feelings, perceptions and uniqueness.

The backward looking, nostalgic aspects of romanticism dovetailed with the Restoration monarchy's agenda to turn back the clock to a mythical pre-revolutionary utopia, and therefore justified the restoration of the church by associating religious devotion with a perception of past existence in medieval times of greater social harmony and grace.

Albert Boime asserts that French romanticism grew out of the Christian revival that had its primary literary sources in Chateaubriand's *Genie de Christianisme,* Mme de Stael's *De l'Allemagne* and the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Delacroix read these writers avidly and they provided him with inspiration for his paintings, particularly the novels of Sir Walter Scott.[30]

Delacroix quickly became famous as a result of the strong approval for his first Salon entry in 1822, which was a respectable history painting, based on Canto VIII in *Dante's Inferno*, or *Dante and Virgil, guided by Phlegias, cross the lake which surrounds the walls of the infernal city of Dis*. This painting established Delacroix's credentials as a respectable up-and-coming history painter. Adolf Thiers, art critic and historian, wrote in Le Constitutionnel on May 11th 1822:

> "No painting it seems to me, better reveals a great painter's future than that of M. de Lacroix, [sic] showing Dante and Virgil in Hell, for it is here especially that one can recognise the burst of talent, the surge of nascent superiority which revive our hopes that had been somewhat discouraged by the too moderate merits of all the

[30] Albert Boime *Art in the Age of Counterrevolution 1815 – 1848 A Social History of Modern Art Volume 3* (2004) The University of Chicago Press USA page 24

rest…Its author has, beyond that poetic imagination which is shared by painters and writers, the imagination of art, what one might in a way call the imagination of drawing, and which differs considerably from the other. He hurls his figures, groups them, bends them to his will with the daring of Michelangelo and the fertility of Rubens. I do not know what recollection of great artists seizes me as I gaze upon this picture, but I find in that wild ardent, but natural power which effortlessly yields to its own impetus …I do not believe I am mistaken in this: M. de Lacroix has been gifted with genius."[31]

The state purchased the painting and hung it in the Luxembourg Museum of Modern Art and Delacroix received a medal.

On the other hand, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, shown at the Salon of 1824, caused enormous controversy. Many critics did not like it because it was too radical in subject matter and too rough in execution. The conflict between the classicists and the romantics erupted at this Salon and Delacroix earned the title of leading romantic at this time. Despite the bitter controversy surrounding this painting, the state nevertheless acquired it and also awarded him "a medal of the second class".[32]

Serullaz wrote:

"With this canvas, Delacroix takes his place as the leader of the romantic school of painting. His palette has become considerably lighter since the Barque of Dante. He has acquired a freer manner, in which one can note the use of hatchings and a deeper knowledge of the reflection of light.

In the luminous landscape, scorched with the sun, which reveals an amazing sense of spatial values, the groups of dying people are reminiscent of those in the *Pest Hospital at Jaffa* of Gros, whose disapproval we have nevertheless already noted, while the Turkish officer carrying off a woman is close to Géricault's *Officer of the Chasseurs of the Guard*.

The Lyricism of the colours combines with the baroque plasticity of the forms to make us forget how easily the subject might have been limited to mere anecdote."[33]

Baudelaire wrote in his *Art Romantique*: "In this work all is desolation, massacre and fire; everything bears witness to the eternal and incorrigible barbarism of man. Burnt-out smoking cities, slaughtered victims, raped women, even children stabbed and thrown beneath the feet of horses, frenzied mothers; this whole work, I say seems like a terrifying hymn composed to

[31] Maurice Sérullaz Eugène, *Delacroix* (1963) The Library of Great Painters, Harry N. Abrahams Inc. Publishers, New York, p.74.
[32] Frank Anderson Trapp, 1970 *The Attainment of Delacroix* p. 42.
[33] Maurice Sérullaz, *Delacroix,* The Library of Great Painters, Harry N. Abrams Inc. Publishers, New York page 78

celebrate doom and irremediable suffering."[34]

In 1826, Delacroix submitted *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*, to the fundraising exhibition for the Greek cause held at the Galerie Lebrun. At the July 1830 Salon he showed arguably his best-known painting, *Liberty Leading the People*. This was also purchased by the state and hung in the Luxembourg Museum (especially founded by the government to show case the work of emerging artists) along with the *Barque of Dante. Liberty Leading the People,* however was quickly taken down and hidden from view for many years because of its reference to radical republicanism. The only major painting by Delacroix rejected by the state was the *Death of Sardanapalus* (1827–28). Scandalised officials threatened him with the loss of state patronage, if he painted such a work again.

It is now one of his most celebrated masterpieces and one of the greatest orientalist paintings. His career received a significant boost in 1832 when he gained a lucrative state commission to decorate public buildings. He continued to receive major decorative commissions for both public and private buildings and these paintings, now regarded as his best work, occupied him for the rest of his life.

In summary, Delacroix's achievements were usually recognised and valued, although reception of his works was not always positive; but whatever reservations his detractors had at the time, subsequent developments in European painting has confirmed his genius.

The following are some 20th century tributes. Ian Chilvers author of the *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* (1990), describes Delacroix as "one of the towering figures of the romantic movement, and one of the last major artists to devote a large part of his career to mural painting in the heroic tradition."[35] Lorenz Eitner, Stanford University Art History Professor and Géricault Scholar writes: "He was the last great European painter to use the repertory of humanistic art with conviction and originality. In his hands, antique and medieval history, Golgotha and the Barricade, Faust and Hamlet, Scott and Byron, tiger and Odalisque, yielded images of equal power. As he grew older, he felt increasingly drawn to the great Venetians and Flemings, to Veronese and Rubens above all. His preoccupation with them was not a return to the past but a claim to an authentic tradition, not

[34] Ibid, p.78.
[35] Chilvers, 2009 *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* (4th edn.) Oxford University Press USA. p.171.

as an imitator but as the legitimate heir."[36]

The poet and writer, Charles Baudelaire, perhaps Delacroix's most ardent admirer, writes on the importance of imagination to Delacroix. In *The Life and Work of Eugène Delacroix, the Painter of Modern Life* is the following quote from the records he made of his conversations with Delacroix "almost at the dictation of the master".[37]… "The whole visible universe is but a store-house of images and signs to which the imagination will give a relative place and value; it is a sort of pasture which the imagination must digest and transform. All the faculties of the human soul must be subordinated to the imagination which puts them into requisition all at once."[38]

Delacroix's productivity, the variety of his subject matter, his originality and the power of his imagination produced imagery referring back in time to Rubens, Titian and Michelangelo and forward in time to the impressionists, post impressionists and their successors. His work links the past and future in European painting. Alan B. Spitzer gives the last word to Baudelaire:… "Baudelaire's affirmation of Delacroix's place in the great tradition in the succession of the old masters… "Take away Delacroix and the great chain of history is broken."[39]

Literature review
Principal sources

This thesis aims to highlight the influence of Greek history and culture both past and present, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. For example, the influence of the neo-classical, (or Grecian) revival, inspired by discoveries of many original classical Greek monuments during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, combined with stories about the living plight of contemporary Greek people engaged in a "David and Goliath" struggle against massive Turkish and Egyptian forces. This brought two contrasting and dramatic images of the Greeks to

[36] Lorenz Eitner, 1887 *An Outline of 19th Century European Painting From David Through Cézanne* Vol 1 Text Harper & Row, New York, p.184.
[37] Charles Baudelaire,1964, *the Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* Phaidon, p.47. This version has been translated from the Conard edition of *Curiosités esthétiques* (1923) and *L'Art romantique* (1925) edited by Jacques Crépet.
[38] Ibid page 49.
[39] Alan B. Spitzer, in Delacroix and his Generation in B. Wright (ed.) 2001 *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* quoting from Charles Baudelaire, *Salon de 1846* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 136, 140.

the fore. Many Europeans joined the massive international movement of philhellenism, and helped shape political and cultural ideas in the turbulent and transformative period of European history. This “mini introduction” or literature review, contributes to the main research questions by identifying the key sources under headings associated with the main research questions. It begins with the subheading *Literature Review Principal Sources* on page 8. These references concern the socio-political situation in Europe, the Greek revolution, the main biographical details of Delacroix’s life, personality and art. The sub heading on page 10 is *Principal Sources regarding Delacroix’s Art*, provides detailed information on his skills and techniques as a painter and his philosophical approach to art and life. *Sources regarding Style and Subject Matter in French Art* on page 15 provides a comprehensive array of resources detailing the dramatic changes in French art, the politicisation of art and the elevation of the status of artists in France, and Delacroix’s role and influence as leading romantic. On page 17 the role and influence of French politics on art and artists combined with the dramatic changes to political society, and the ideological polarisation of French society.

Under the subheading, *Greek History and Politics* on page 18, the references here provide detailed descriptions of the stages of Greek history and the dramatic vagaries of a history that profoundly shaped and transformed the Greek psyche.

The Subheading *the Crusades* on page 19, exists to inform the background to Delacroix’s fourth and most mature painting in the group, Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople. It allows us to observe the technical and colourisitic heights he reached in his mature years.

On one level, this thesis is concerned with the way Delacroix’s art interrelates with the Greek struggle for Independence and self-determination. Since the Greek war of Independence inspired two of the four paintings, namely *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* and *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*, therefore these two paintings occupy half of the thesis. Having said that, the two other paintings, *Medea Pursued and about to kill her children* and *The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* play a unifying and explanatory role, providing an extensive historical background which performs the function of tying the four paintings together. Sweeping historical themes from antiquity, the medieval period and his own time are a strong feature of Eugène Delacroix’s oeuvre..

It is likely therefore that the viewer may be inclined to take into account the long term and the short-term historical context of Delacroix's paintings. A substantial part of the subject matter of his art does tend to be associated with his own time, because of the compelling character of the socio-political circumstances in which he worked, involving as it did the rise and fall of the Napoleonic Empire, the Bourbon Restoration, and the Greek War of Independence, all considered from an art historical perspective. His vision, honed on the classics, and steeped in the European conception of "Greece" and "Rome", were deeply embedded in his psyche, providing him with a deep well from which to draw inspiration to express his emotional and intellectual experience in contemporary times.

The contemporary history of the Greeks was therefore close to the centre of the political and cultural narrative of the early nineteenth century became a beacon for progress and freedom. The social and political chaos that Europe and indeed most of the world experienced from about the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century transformed most of the world and radically transformed Greek history. For historians of both art and politics, these issues have long been a fertile field for research and now a very large, erudite and growing scholarship exists around this pivotal period that transformed European art, politics and Greek society.

Owing to the enormous amount written about this period in terms of Delacroix's art, and its relationship to revolutionary and political and social changes that occurred then, the following literature review can only cover the most reliable sources related to these topics.

Principal Sources regarding Delacroix's biography and his career.

Hubert Wellington (editor), 1995 *Painter of Passion: The Journal of Eugène Delacroix* (trans. Lucy Norton. Intro. Timothy Wilson-Smith) Phaidon Press, London.

Jean Stewart (editor/trans. Intro. John Russell) 1970 *Eugène Delacroix Selected Letters 1813–1863.* MFA Publications Boston Massachusetts.

An essential starting point for studying the artist and his work are his Journals and letters. I relied on the English translations of both because I do not speak French.

The above two references are translations of Delacroix's own writings. He began the Journal in

1822 and continued it until April 1832. Then there was a gap of fifteen years and he resumed writing in it in January 1847. In the Journal, he writes about everything important to him, his aspirations, family, lovers, art, and technical, theoretical and ideological issues mostly related to art. In this activity, he emulates Leonardo. His letters are also extremely valuable additions to the Journal. They provide a lot of insight into his personality, his work habits his social life and his friendships.

Lee Johnson 1981 *the Paintings of Eugéne Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1816–1831* Volume I Text Oxford University Press, New York.

Lee Johnson 1981 *the Paintings of Eugéne Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1816–183I* Volume II Plates Oxford University Press, New York.

Lee Johnson 1986 *the Paintings of Eugéne Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1832–1863 (Moveable Pictures and Private Decorations)* Volume III Text Oxford University Press, New York.

Lee Johnson 1986 *the Paintings of Eugéne Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1832–1863* Volume IV Plates Oxford University Press, New York.

The above four volumes by Lee Johnson of the Critical catalogue of Delacroix's painting are the most comprehensive and reliable catalogue on Delacroix's painting to date. It is the essential reference for the provenance of each of his paintings.

Frank Anderson Trapp 1970 *The Attainment of Delacroix* Johns Hopkins University Press, USA.

René Huyghe 1963 *Delacroix* (translated from the French by Jonathan Griffin) Thames &Hudson, London.

Barthélémy Jobert 1997 *Delacroix* (translated by Terry Graber and Alexandra Bonfante-Warren) Princeton University Press, USA.

The authors above provide detailed accounts of the artist's life, his family and his art and discuss at length the social and political impact on French art in the context of revolutionary change and social upheavals. One of these authors, René Huyghe also wrote *Delacroix and Greece* (1971) published by the Ionian and Popular bank of Greece. The occasion was the 150th anniversary of the Greek War of Independence and the publication officially commissioned in recognition of Delacroix's paintings about the Greek War of Independence.

Principal Sources regarding Delacroix's art

Albert Boime 1987 A Social History of Modern Art Volume 1*, Art in the Age of Revolution 1750–1800* The University of Chicago Press, USA.

Albert Boime 1990 A Social History of Modern Art Volume 2, *Art in the Age of Bonapartism 1800–1815* The University of Chicago Press, USA.

Albert Boime 2004 A Social History of Modern Art Volume 3, *Art in the Age of Counter Revolution 1815–1848* The University of Chicago Press, USA.

Albert Boime 2007 A Social History of Modern Art Volume 4, *Art in the Age of Civil Struggle 1848–1871* The University of Chicago Press, USA.

The four volumes of the social history of art by Albert Boime, is a detailed and wide-ranging account of the subject. Boime is a dedicated social historian of art, and these four volumes discuss hundreds of works of art. They are mostly French but there are also numerous Italian, British, German and Spanish works. It represents a significant study of European art during tumultuous revolutionary times. He demonstrates how the transformations in European art paralleled the transformations in European society, among which, perhaps the most radical transformations occurred in France.

Nina M. Athanassoglou Kallmyer's dissertation,1980 *French Images from the Greek War of Independence 1821–1827: Art and Politics under the Restoration* and the book with the same title published in 1989, has been a valuable source of information. Her extensive research on French images from the Greek War of Independence is the most comprehensive account available on this period in French art. Her thesis focused on images based on the Greek War of Independence created by French artists. She analysed these images according to the norms of romanticism, namely modernity, exoticism and liberty, and considered the critical responses these works elicited, regardless of whether any of the specific political messages they carried, or the political orientation of their critics had any effect on their aesthetic evaluation. She concluded that neither the specific political messages of the art works nor the political orientation of the critics had much

effect on the aesthetic evaluation of works of art.[40]

Michele Hannoosh 1995 *Painting and the Journal of Eugène Delacroix* Princeton University Press, USA analyses Delacroix's comments on "the true power of painting" and on his many other activities. This detailed, scholarly work is a carefully researched book that highlights Delacroix's literary credentials. She discusses his journal, which he kept for many years these include his published articles about art and art history, the compilation of his dictionary of fine art, which he never completed, and his theoretical and philosophical thoughts on art. She refers to his comments on the art of great painters of the past and present, his philosophical interests on his public murals and reflections on his crowning achievement, the murals in the church of Saint-Sulpice.

She examined his thoughts on the end of civilisation in Eik Kahng (with essays by Marc Gotlieb Michèle Hannoosh) 2013 *Delacroix and the Matter of Finish* Santa Barbara Museum of Art Yale University Press USA.

Elisabeth A. Fraser 2004 *Delacroix, Art and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France* Cambridge University Press, UK. Fraser takes a contextual approach around issues of feminism and gender. She focuses on the return of patriarchal society under the Restoration, and the return of absolute monarchy, and the reversal of sexual equality. Situating Delacroix among other artists of the period, she refers to his conservatism and paternalistic attitude to women, concluding that he was neither radical nor innovative but essentially a mainstream artist.

Beth Wright, 1997 *Painting and History during the French Restoration Abandoned by the Past* examines intellectual and aesthetic context in which Delacroix and his peers are working in Restoration France. It contains detailed accounts of the lengths required in researching, preparing and executing formal history painting. History painting had been the principal genre since the early neo-classical revival but after the revolution and the fall of Napoleon there was a re-evaluation of history and historiography. Traditional history painting had a strong intellectual aspect with its classical focus and its reverence for mythological subjects while the romantics delved into the inner world of imagination and dreams questioning the prominence of reason and rationality and seeking

to explore further the perceptions of the inner world in art through poetry theatre and music.

Beth Wright (ed.), 2001 *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* Cambridge University Press USA. This is a significant source of recent writing about Delacroix by important scholars in the field of Delacroix studies. I consulted this publication and the writers who contributed to it frequently particularly the writers listed below.

- Alan B. Spitzer, 'Delacroix and his Generation' Pages 8 – 25. In this chapter, the focus is on the cohort of artists who began their careers during and after the Napoleonic Empire and the restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy. Spitzer notes that Delacroix was about the same age and went to the same school as Victor Hugo, (the famous author of Les Miserable). He trained in the vibrant studio of Pierre-Narcisse Guérin with several other students destined to become great artists such as Théodóre Géricault, and Ary Scheffer and his brothers. Spitzer discusses the radicalisation of artists of Delacroix's generation, and the associated rejection of neo-classicism and the rise of romanticism.
- James H. Rubin, 'Delacroix and Romanticism' pages 26 – 47. In this chapter of the Cambridge Companion to Delacroix Rubin discusses the importance to Delacroix of the importance of his own inner world, its role in accessing alternative representations of reality as the site of constant struggle against triviality, temporality and disillusionment.
- Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby 'Orients and Colonies: Delacroix's Algerian harem' pages 69 - 87. Grigsby discusses Delacroix's fascination with the Orient and orientalism. Regarded as the earliest and arguably the greatest exponent of orientalism in European art, Delacroix's paternalism and sexism is a central aspect her discussion. Grigsby's critical theoretical approach combines elements of feminism, Freudian and Marxist theory. Her analysis of French colonialism reflects on his attitude to slavery and his obsessive desire to study and paint women in a harem.
- Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer contributed 'Eugène Delacroix and Popular Culture', pages. 48–68

  She discusses the emergence of British Gothicism in France that influenced many artists including Delacroix. She traces his longstanding fascination with gothic horror back to his

adolescent years and his avid consumption of English literature, such as Shakespeare, Byron and Scott. She explains that Delacroix was not averse to the commercial appeal of popular art.

- David Scott, 'Painting/Literature: The Impact of Delacroix on Aesthetic Theory, Art Criticism, and Poetics in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France', pp. 170–186.

  David Scott writes about the influence contemporary theorists such as Quatremere de Quincy and Victor Cousin had on Delacroix, particularly in helping him shape his concept of the role of imitation in art. He writes that the process of imitation is not a static process arguing that it involves a process including selection of traits stored in memory, combined with the imagination and the direct observation of form and object decomposes them and creates new images from this process.

- Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby 2004 *Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* Cambridge University Press UK.

In this publication, Grigsby focuses on the creation of art at a time when colonial expansion is at its height. She analyses Delacroix's art in terms of the slave trade, the trafficking of white women and the resurgence of patriarchy.

Lorenz Eitner 1987 *An Outline of 19th Century European Painting From David through Cézanne Volume 1 Text* Harper and Row Publishers USA.

Eitner summarises Delacroix's life and career, linking his art the future by connecting him with Cézanne, thus emphasising the impact of Delacroix on French artists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Delacroix's idiosyncratic style made him the link between the present and the future as well as the past and the present.

Jack Spector 1974 *Art in Context Delacroix: The Death of Sardanapalus* Penguin Books Ltd London. This reference was included because the author, Jack Spector, was interested in exploring Delacroix's personality as he saw it revealed in this painting. Spector undertook to write this book because he felt the painting had a "unique power". It suggested much about the artist's psychology to him, such as the ferocity and sensual impact of the painting, its erotic context and its

depiction of unleashed sadistic behaviour. Delacroix called three of his paintings his three great massacres. These three paintings are: *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios (1824)*, *the death of Sardanapalus* and *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople.* Two of these paintings, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* and *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* make up two of the four paintings central to this thesis. *The Death of Sardanapalus* was not included in this thesis because it is not about Greece.

George P. Mras 1966 Eugène Delacroix's Theory of Art Princeton University Press USA.

Mras details the nature of Delacroix's approach to art and to his painting. He discusses Delacroix's view that art is chiefly a bridge or means of communication between artist and spectator and not an end in itself. Mras points out that Delacroix was not an original theorist but he had a deep respect for those who were.

(See also page 17 referring to Dorothy Johnson's 2011 publication *David to Delacroix*, and Paul W. Schroeder 1994 *the Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848* Oxford University, and C. M. Woodhouse 1968 *Modern Greece: A Short History* Faber and Faber Ltd. London.

Sources regarding Style and subject matter in French art.

Michael Levy 1966 and 1967 *Rococo to Revolution: Major Trends in Eighteenth Century Painting* Thames & Hudson Ltd, London.

Levy covers trends in European art and particularly French art during the eighteenth century. He covers the rejection of rococo in the early eighteenth century and the changing political environment in France, leading to a new mood of seriousness overtaking France around the mid eighteenth century. The outcome in aesthetic terms was the emergence of neo-classicism in art and architecture and the rise of the artist Jacques-Louis David.

The following references are essential and time-honoured references on neo-classicism and romanticism.

Hugh Honour 1968 *Neoclassicism* (Style and Civilisation) Penguin Books, UK.

Hugh Honour provides a detailed account on the development of neo-classicism, its evolution and longevity as a popular style, particularly in European architecture, which in some ways attest to the

endurance of classical values in Western society. The relationship between the style and the French revolution generated remarkable works of European art. It survival during the romantic revolution from 1819 on as the opposition to Romanticism saw the two styles change sides politically. Romanticism instead of neo-classicism represented progress and freedom, and neo-classicism represented tradition and a return to the past. Hugh Honour provides over 100 images to explain this complex and enduring cultural phenomenon.

Robert Rosenberg 1967 Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art Princeton University Press USA. Rosenberg focusses on the ambiguities and complexities involved in understanding and defining neo-classicism. He takes an archaeological approach to the origins of neoclassicism and considers early efforts to develop the style based on discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum. He traces the evolution of the style during the eighteenth century and delivers a complex and nuanced discussion about the style, its subtleness and widely divergent interpretations, supported with over two hundred images of paintings and architecture by French, British and German artists among others.

Hugh Honour 1979 *Romanticism* Harper & Row Publishers Inc., New York.

Hugh Honour's detailed account of the role of romanticism during the post-revolutionary, post Napoleonic period in the early nineteenth century highlighted the political as well as aesthetic roles. Many of its adherents, like Delacroix, were radicalised by the return of the Bourbon monarchy and the repressive measures it took against revolutionaries and Bonapartists. It became the style of protest, taking its subject matter from contemporary disasters and political excess, landscapes, imagination, the irrational, and horror in its interpretation of modern realities contrasting them with utopian dreams of the medieval past. Honour provides over two hundred images.

William Vaughan 1978 *Romanticism and Art* Thames & Hudson Ltd., London.

William Vaughan's account is similar and updated account of the main features of romanticism, with over two hundred high quality images, a good proportion of them in colour, which greatly enchances their power.

Lorenz Eitner (Ed. H.W. Janson) 1970 *Neoclassism and Romanticism1750–1850 Volume 1 Enlightenment/Revolution* Sources and Documents in the History of Art series Prentice-Hall

London.

Frederick Antal 1966 *Classicism and Romanticism with Other Studies in Art History* Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. London.

Frederick Antal's analysis of classicism and romanticism has a Marxist perspective, eschewing certain aspects of the politically neutral formalism that dominated art theory and criticism at the time he wrote this study. His analysis takes account of the ideological and stylistic complexities of both styles and combines it with a vigorous visual analysis of technique and structure in the paintings he discusses.

Dorothy Johnson 2011 *David to Delacroix: The Rise of Romantic Mythology* the University of North Carolina Press, USA.

This is an up to date analysis of the resurgence of Greco-Roman in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in tandem with the rise of the Hellenic or Grecian revival emerging worldwide and influencing art, architecture and politics throughout the Western world. It provides a very useful reference for understanding the importance if the Grecian revival in particular in France.

French politics

I used these references because they provided useful background information and analyses of the significant events occurring in France during this period particularly the Enlightenment, the French revolution, the Napoleonic Empire and the Bourbon Restoration.

Roy Porter *the Enlightenment* (2nd edition) (2001) Palgrave, UK.

Porter's succinct summary of the Enlightenment was a valuable introduction to the main ideas of the Enlightenment, such as individual freedom, rationalism, the transformation of aesthetic philosophy, and the embrace of science.

Alfred Cobban 1957, 1961, 1963 A History of Modern France Volume 1, 1715–1799 *Old Regime and Revolution* Penguin Books, UK.

Alfred Cobban 1961–1965 A History of Modern France Volume 2, *From the First Empire to the Second Empire 1799–1871* Penguin Books, UK.

Alfred Cobban's three volumes of the history of Modern France was a valuable resource which was consulted frequently on topics relating to the changing socio-political situation before the French

revolution, the Napoleonic Empire, the Bourbon Restoration and the

Popkin J. 2010 *A Short History of the French Revolution* (5th edition) Pearson Prentice Hall USA

Paul W. Schroeder 1994 *the Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848* Oxford University Press Inc. New York.

Greek history and politics

Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer (nee Souyoudjoglou) dissertation, 1980 *French Images from the Greek War of Independence 1821–1827: Art and Politics under the Restoration*Princeton University, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor Michigan.

Athanassoglou-Kallmyer's dissertation was an important source for Greek history and the political turbulence of the period. She coined the phrase national awakenings to describe the out breaks of insurrections all over Europe and the rest of the world and discussed the emergence, after the fall of Napoleon, of the Congress of Vienna, whose aim was to maintain the balance of power and suppress all revolutions.

Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos (trans. from the Greek by Ian and Phania Moles) 1976 *The Greek Nation, 1453 – 1669 The Cultural and Economic background Of Modern Greek Society* Rutgers University Press USA. This covers the darkest period of Greek occupation by the Turks. There were vastly different experiences among the Greek population depending on where they lived. The economic, social and intellectual life of the peasantry stagnated under Turkish control, but this control did not reach diaspora Greeks, They spread the word of the enlightenment and ultimately paved the way to the Greek war of Independence in the 1820s.

Richard Clogg, 1992 *A Concise History of Greece* Cambridge University Press, UK.

A succinct presentation of the most important issues in Greek history

C. M. Woodhouse 1968 *Modern Greece: A Short History* Faber and Faber Ltd. London.

This book begins in the fourth century with the reign of the Eastern Roman Emperor Constantine, and finishes with the growth of the Greek Kingdom until the civil war of 1947. It covers around two thousand years of Greek history and gives an idea of the depth and complexity of Greek history and culture.

The Crusades

George Ostrogorsky 1969 the *History of the Byzantine State*. Rutgers University Press USA. This is necessary reading to gain an overview of the rise of Christianity and the Byzantine Empire. It is a very useful reference for understanding this phase of Greek history and the decline into Ottoman occupation. This is relevant to the fourth painting in the group of paintings central to this thesis, *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*. This painting concerns the occupation of Constantinople by the fourth crusade in 1204. Other books consulted on the Crusades include:

Micheal Angold *The Fourth Crusade* (2003) Pearson Education Limited UK

Jonathan Harris 2007 *Constantinople Capital of Byzantium* Continuum UK

These references provide detailed and up to date account of the fourth Crusade, the sack of Constantinople and the establishment of the brief Latin Empire in the East.

The Alexiad of Anna Comnena 1969 (translated from Greek by. E.R.A. Sewter) Penguin Books Ltd. UK. This is the biography of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius 1st 1081 – 1118 by his daughter Anna Komnena. It focusses on the First Crusade and the complex relationships between the Eastern and the Western Roman Empires and the armies of Normans, Scythians, Turks and Cumans threatening the Byzantine Empire.

Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (eds.) 2009 *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism and the Uses of the Past (1797–1896)* Ashgate Publishing Ltd., UK.

William St Clair 2008 *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the Greek War of Independence* (with a new introduction by Roderick Beaton) Open Book Publishers, UK.

This is a comprehensive account of the Greek War of Independence through the prism of philhellenism. The New Statesman reviewer of the first edition wrote: “The dominant theme is the contrast between the philhellenic vision of Greece and the Greek reality. It is a compassionate account of the power of dreams and illusions and the tragic consequences of those who failed to understand the underlying reality. “

Douglas Daikin 1955 *British and American Philhellenes During the Greek War of Independence, 1821–1833* Society for Macedonian Studies Thessaloniki Greece.

Dakin's study focuses on the British and American Philhellenes during the Greek War of Independence. He researched both Greek and British sources, writing that the British and American philhellenes, while relatively small in number were very important to the revolution because they represented the disinterested idealism and ardour of Europeans inspired by the ancient legacy of Greece to free Greece from Ottoman occupation.

The next two references, Quataert and Macfie, cover issues associated with the decline of the Ottoman Empire and its role in European politics

Donald Quataert 2000, 2005 *The Ottoman Empire 1700–1922* Cambridge University Press, UK.

A. L. Macfie 1996 *The Eastern Question 1774–1923* (revised edition) Longman, London.

Rodanthi Tzanelli 2008 *Nation-Building and Identity in Europe: The Dialogics of Reciprocity* Palgrave Macmillan, UK.

Loukis Charilaou Theocharides 1971 *The Greek National Revival and the French Enlightenment* PhD Dissertation University Microfilms, University of Pittsburgh. This is a most useful account of the Greek Enlightenment. It is clear, methodical and fascinating. It gives detailed accounts of the ideological battles between Greek intellectuals and the Orthodox clergy, who were usually hostile to the Enlightenment because it advocated secularism.

Methodology

The methodology applied to this thesis is social art history. Visual art combined with the politics and culture of France and Greece during the early part of the nineteenth century play a dominant role in this narrative. It supports the notion that a work of art is best analysed and interpreted in the context of the social and political circumstances of its creation. These days, social art history is the most widely used methodology for examining and studying visual art.

Social art history acknowledges the relevance of context for understanding art. It also requires historical specificity and flexibility in the approach to analysing of a work of art. This is necessary in order to understand the relationship between it and its social and political origins, located in time and space. Without that contextual understanding, it is unlikely that a deep and meaningful appreciation of a work of art is possible. Without understanding context, art appears less comprehensible and less relevant.

Social art history methodology is widely used by prominent art historians such as Albert Boime, Michael Hatt, Charlotte Klonk and Elizabeth Gilmore Holt among others.

Albert Boime, author of the four volumes of *A Social History of Modern Art*[41] covers European art produced in the context of the upheavals and transformations occurring during the international revolutionary period from 1750 to 1871. He asserted that it is not appropriate to separate the historical, cultural and political context of artists and their work and demonstrates this point of view in his examination of countless European art works produced during this period. Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk in *Art History: a Critical Introduction to its Methods,*[42] describe social art history as a "broad church" with a methodology aimed at historical specificity in its analytical categories, making it the most widely practiced methodology applied to the study of art history.

Elizabeth Gilmore Holt[43] devoted her life to the documentation of art, by reconstructing the historical context of works of art through the associated documents of the time. She was a strong advocate for the visual analysis of a work of art within the socio-political and cultural context of its time. Her thorough documentation of art works was a significant step towards a better understanding of art. She believed it was essential to have documentary evidence of perceptions of art works in their own time. She objected to the elitism and exclusivity of solely formalist readings of a work of art, and her research into the historical roots of art history enabled her to demonstrate that artists really intended their works to reach the largest possible audience not just connoisseurs and educated elites.[44]

Albert Boime's four volumes of the *Social History of Art* are detailed studies on French art, philosophy and practice during this period. They provide comprehensive evaluations of the attitudes, values and contributions of hundreds of visual artists and their work during this period. They analyse the inter-relationship between art, politics and society from 1750 to 1871, with detailed studies on French art, philosophy and practice during this period.

[41]Albert Boime 1987 A Social History of Modern Art Vol.1 *Art in the Age of Revolution 1750–1800,* p.xx.
[42] Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, 2006 *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods* Manchester University Press, UK, p. 134.
[43] Gabriel P. Weisberg Laurinda S. Dixon (eds. with the assistance of Antje B. Lemke) 1987 'The Legacy of Elizabeth Gilmore Holt.' In *The Documented Image Visions in Art History* Syracuse University Press USA pages xvii - xxviii
[44] Gabriel P. Weisberg G and Laurinda S. Dixon (eds.) with the assistance of Antje Bultmann Lemke, 1987 *The Documented Image Visions in Art History* Syracuse University Press, New York, pps. Xviii, xix.

Contribution

This thesis attempts to deal with important wide-ranging issues regarding French art, French history, and Greek history, so it was necessary to consult a large number of references. This literature review though contains only those references of greatest relevance to the main aims of the thesis. The conclusion drawn from this research is that this thesis does fill a gap in the scholarship. After extensive reading concerning the historical political and social events shaping Eugène Delacroix's life and art, no other study has come to light that combines the four specific works of art as this thesis does, thus providing an original contribution to knowledge in this area.

The originality and interest in this thesis comes from the way the four paintings together refer to Delacroix's interest in Greece, not only for the period that includes *Medea* and the *Crusaders entering Constantinople,* and beyond the obvious interest in Delacroix's political and social interests and development, but also to another aspect of his interests. During the course of the thesis, it became obvious that Delacroix focussed on European art, but from an Eastern perspective, which he demonstrated with his strong and abiding interest in orientalism. The themes he pursued involved his own unique application of brilliant colour.

The theme of colour dominated his work from the start. His observation of the effect of the accidental fall of light on the bodies of working men on a Paris bridge, which made the contrast between light and shade particularly strong, dramatically altered his attitude to the relationship between light and shade and influenced the way he painted the last painting in the group of four, *Crusaders Entering Constantinople* (1841). The effect of light struck him most forcefully when he went to North Africa in 1832, with its brilliant Mediterranean light. This was one of two significant discoveries he made on this that trip.

The way the Berbers struck him while he was there, how perceived the robed Berbers as Romans and Greeks was a very important revelation for him and it influenced his attitude to classicism in his own painting. Presumably, he assumed that the light he experienced in North Africa was the same as the light in Greece. It appears that Delacroix had such a strong personal vision of Greece that even though he never went to Greece, or Rome for that matter, his imagined vision of Greece

and Rome was an important source of inspiration for him and it contributed much to his development as an artist.

Through these four paintings, it is possible to trace the milestones in his artistic development, referred to in paragraph three, page 15.

The first painting in this group, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* (1824), was a powerful romantic/orientalist painting which triggered the bitter and protracted division in the French art world between adherents of neo-classicism and romanticism. The next painting in this group, the allegory of *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* (1826) was a striking contrast to the previous painting. *Messolongi,* with its cool classical colour and mood showed an obvious inclination towards classicism (rather than neo-classicism). The next two paintings, *Medea* (1838) and *Crusaders Entering Constantinople,* are the Greek window through which he moved freely between romanticism, classicism and realism, giving fuller scope to the imagination, not overrun with details, inspiring each viewer to 'finish' the work of art in his or her own way.[45] Indeed these four important paintings demonstrate Delacroix the freedom of expression in his application of colour, the freedom of his imagination in creating images combining elements of classicism, romanticism and orientalism. Therefore, this thesis focusses on the analysis of the four "Greek" Delacroix paintings, in order to understand the process through which Delacroix conceived these paintings and the process he undertook to complete them. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to understand the historical and cultural developments of the period in which he lived and worked and how they impinged on artistic and cultural changes, revolutions and Delacroix's vision. Each painting is unique, telling a different story about Greece and about the artist and shedding a new perspective on the artist and his work.

[45] Michéle Hannoosh 1995 *Painting and the Journal of Eugène Delacroix* Princeton University Press USA page 73

CHAPTER 2
FROM NEO-CLASSICISM TO ROMANTICISM

Mannerism, baroque, rococo.

In order to understand the play of opposites in French art during the early nineteenth century, it is necessary to discuss the origins of the styles that dominated French art prior to that period. The six styles under discussion reflect changing moods in art and taste over time, in the context of the political and social upheavals that accompanied them, making it possible to observe the relationship between changes in styles and changes in political and social issues.

For example, certain characteristics, such as asymmetry and distortion in form in paintings in the late Renaissance, such as those in the figures of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the Sistine chapel refer to the upheavals associated with the rise of Protestant reformation. The flamboyance and excesses of the baroque on the other hand represented counter-reformation, the Catholic response to the austerity of the reformation.

Towards the end of Louis XIV's reign, when his power was waning and his recent personal religious reform made him live a more subdued existence Rococo began to supplant baroque. The oppressiveness of the pomp, public spectacle and ceremony, of Versailles during the height of his reign gave way to the intimacy and playful garden settings of rococo.

Financial difficulties beset the French court as the excesses caused by absolute monarchs from Louis XIV to Louis XV and the unfortunate Louis XVI, depleted financial resources. The last named, monarch, Louis XVI was the presiding monarch when the French Revolution broke out in 1789. By then monarchical excesses had exacted their toll. Food and grain shortages and royal bankruptcy forced society to look for a more ethical social outlook.

French society reflected on Roman and Athenian virtues, and developed a style of painting known today as 'neo-classical' that reflected rationality and self-sacrifice, by putting the state before the individual. It looked to the classical world for examples of good government and social responsibility. Jacques-Louis David, neo-classicism's most powerful and lasting interpreter of these values, created images that embodied these principles. The neo-classical order representing

restraint, reason and rationality dominated French thinking until the full cost of the Revolution as it progressed to the excesses of violence such as the reign of terror burst upon them, and artists began to turn inward to the world of the imagination and individual feeling instead.

Mannerism

Mannerism was a late Renaissance style whose characteristic features were distortions of space, asymmetry, and contorted, writhing figures. The emergence of this style coincided with the Protestant Reformation, and the split between the Lutheran and Catholic churches.

The "Lutherian" moment in 1517[46] and the sack of Rome in 1527 were the two events that destroyed the relationship between the Catholics and Protestants. Lutheran mercenaries had fighting with the Pope's forces but they had not been paid for some time. Driven by hunger and outrage they sacked and pillaged the holy city, and devastated its inhabitants, physically and psychologically. Artists fled from Rome, and consequently the city lost its artistic vitality for a time.[47]

Baroque

Baroque is a term derived from the Portuguese language meaning a 'misshapen pearl'. It is a distinctive European style that came after mannerism (late sixteenth century), and preceded the French rococo of the early eighteenth century.

Baroque originated in Rome around 1600. It was an elaborate, ornate style of decoration with whirling, dynamic lines and magnificent grandiose display. It came into existence to celebrate the glory of Catholicism and to counteract the austerity of the Protestant reformation. The Catholic Church initiated the movement to appeal to the emotions and feelings of its congregation, and thus strengthen the Catholic Church.[48]It encouraged the creation of religious art on a grandiose scale with lavish florid decoration of church interiors.

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[46] The 'Lutherian moment' in 1517 refers to the date on which Martin Luther posted ninety-five theses (questions) on the church door in Wittenberg challenging the practices of the Catholic church and for which he was excommunicated. (Soltes Z DVD *Art Across the Ages,* lecture 25, part 3, 'The Reformation and the Mannerist Crisis'), The Great Courses, the Teaching Company, USA.

[47] Professor William Kloss, *A History of European Art, Mannerism and the Late Work of Michelangelo*, DVD disc 5 lecture 27. The Great Courses, the Teaching Company USA (2007)

[48] Ian Chilvers (1990) *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists,* p. 42.

However baroque was not exclusively at the service of the Church. Absolutist monarchs co-opted its emotional power for their own glory and none so flamboyantly as Louis XIV. He exploited baroque's propaganda value to promote himself as a vision of regal splendour.[49] Ian Chilvers wrote that the "greatest expression" of the baroque style was at the palace of Versailles, where its ostentatious combination of architecture, sculpture, painting, decoration and the art of the gardener produced a baroque fusion of the arts to create an overwhelmingly impressive whole.[50]

Among the artists most closely associated with baroque, was the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640). Ian Chilvers describes Rubens as a "painter, draughtsman, designer and diplomat, and the greatest exponent of baroque art in northern Europe". His greatest French admirers were the great rococo painter Anton Watteau, Eugène Delacroix, who called him the Homer of painting, and later one of the leading impressionists, Pierre-August Renoir. [51] His numerous religious and secular paintings, full of elaborate sensuality, vitality of movement and "stormy colours"[52], placed him at the apex of baroque painters.

Among the Italian painters were Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio and Anibale Carracci. They were the two great figures of the baroque tradition in Italian painting because they brought to it a "solidity and weightiness"[53] which had been lacking in painting after the Renaissance.

Rococo

Around 1700, the weightiness of the baroque style of the court of Louis XIV gave way to a new lighter courtly style known as rococo. Like baroque, it dealt in complex forms, but its lightness and playfulness counteracted the oppressiveness, formality, pomp and ceremony of Louis XIV's baroque court. Rococo heralded a period of intellectual and personal freedom for an aristocracy that had been obliged to live at Versailles for almost 72 years and to conform to the oppressive formality demanded by the absolute monarch.

[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid, pp. 551-53.
[52] Phoebe Pool, 1969 *Delacroix: the Colour Library of Art* The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., p.22.
[53] Caravaggio, a brilliant figurative artist, employed strongly contrasting shadow and light and deep resonating colour in his paintings of figures engaged in vigorous action such as his *Flagellation* or his *St John The Baptist*. He illuminated selected faces and buried his compositions in theatrically dramatic shadows. Carracci applied similar effects in his landscapes. Both artists dramatically conveyed the drama and suffering of humanity as well as its pleasures. Philippe In Daudy The XVIIth Century 1(1968) Edito-Service SA, Geneva pages 14 - 19

Descriptions of rococo include terms such as frivolous, playful, light and elegant. Sometimes rococo was described as 'irrational', because of its emphasis on feelings, refinement, amorality, elegance and grace.[54] Rococo briefly replaced grand history painting and encouraged genre painting, portraiture, landscape and still life on a human scale. It was an intimate, light, refined and playful style applied extensively to architecture, ornaments, fabrics and wallpaper as well as to painting. Rococo is "…characterised by lightness, grace and intimacy…"[55] and became widespread throughout France and Europe.

Anton Watteau, designated by royal appointment the "peintre des fetes galantes" was the greatest exponent of rococo. He transformed the ponderousness of baroque into elegant lightness. During his short life (1684 – 1721) he produced works celebrating love, elegance and enjoyment of life. The subjects of his paintings were dressed in garments of light fabrics, coloured in bright pastel tones indulging in the elegant leisure activities of the aristocracy and wealthy middle class. His most famous painting *Embarkation for Kythera* is an elegy in paint about the transience of love. Watteau died at the age of 36 and more enduring though less interesting rococo painters succeeded him. The most famous of these were François Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard continued the rococo tradition with sensuous and rather salacious paintings, virtually forgotten today, but which brought them great popularity in their own time. These paintings could not equal the quality of the work of Watteau.

Neo-classicism

Hugh Honour author of *Neo-classicism*[56] wrote that during the eighteenth century, people simply called neo-classicism the "true style" and the "reassertion of timeless truths", not a fashion.[57] Eighteenth-century neoclassicism was an attempt to recreate "the true style of the ancients" adding that eighteenth century architects, artists and designers, simply referred to it as the "true style."[58]

[54] This was epitomised in the works of Jean-Antoine Watteau, whose paintings were described as fêtes galantes, depicting pleasure loving people in arcadian landscapes and intimate gardens.
[55] Ibid, p. 534.
[56] Hugh Honour 1968 *Style and Civilisation Neo-classicism* Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England UK
[57] Ibid p.14.
[58] Grafton, Most, Settis (eds.) 2010 *The Classical Tradition* The Belknap Press of Harvard University Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, p. 629

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists,[59] classicism is a "term describing the spirit of order, clarity, and harmony traditionally associated with the art of ancient Greece and Rome".[60] In the *Oxford History of the Classical World*, the world of antiquity was called 'classical'… because this title carried "…the implication that the works of art and literature produced in Greco-Roman antiquity possess an absolute value. The standard by which to judge all art"[61]

Ian Chilvers, places the beginnings of neoclassicism in Rome, around the middle of the eighteenth century. There the first classical artist of the period, Anton Raphael Mengs, and the scholar Johan Joachim Winckelmann met around 1755[62], and together they promoted a style that came to dominate French art and to became the signature of the French Revolution, because of the brilliance of its greatest interpreter, Jacques-Louis David. Mengs himself, while celebrated as a great classical artist in his lifetime, did not survive well historically. Nevertheless, his passion for the schools of Raphael and Poussin determined these to be the subject matter and style of history painting until the rise of romanticism in the early nineteenth century.

French neoclassicism emerged after the reign of Louis XV (1740–1774) as an ideological quest and took shape just before the French revolution broke out in 1789. The style emulates the most enduring features of Classical Greek and Roman art and architecture but it was simply called the Greek style, or the *Goût grec*—not neoclassicism or even classicism. These terms are labels used by later art historians to define technical conventions, and the choice of subject matter characteristic of works of art seen to be representative of the attitudes and values of a particular time. This style was popular from the mid-eighteenth century on and dominated fine and applied arts in France and Britain.

The style is recognizable today because of the rectilinear forms in the furniture, and the characteristic features of antiquity, such as Vitruvian scrolls[63] and heavy swags that provided interior decoration. The mania for à la Grecque grew, affecting everything. The interiors of buildings, furniture, fabrics, jewelry, and hairstyles were in the "Greek style," albeit a style based on

[59] Ian Chilvers, 1990 *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* p. 131.
[60] Ibid page131
[61] Boardman, Griffin, Murray (eds.) 1986 *The Oxford History of the Classical World* Oxford University Press, p. 1.
[62] Ian Chilvers, 1990 *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* Oxford University Press, p.436.
[63] These are architectural decorations or scrolls like waves, used in moldings and borders on buildings, named after Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, a 1st century BCE Roman architect.

a pastiche of imagined Greek ornamentation.[64] Gradually the style evolved. It did not stop at the decorative elements of style. The leadership of the French Revolution went further and emulated the ancients in rituals, dress, manner and ideas.

In the 1790s, French revolutionary wars closed the Rome Academy, but in France, there was unlimited public access to revolutionary exhibitions, and the status of artists increased. They rose in status from artisan to "artist as self-creating exemplar of virtue", and this led to the entry of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy into the profession, under their influence artists had to create works of art that inspired patriotic fervor and self-sacrifice for the good of the state. The style became the signature of the French Revolution and at its zenith, was a style full of dignity and optimistic idealism, offering the promise of a better world for all.

In order to understand the emergence of French neoclassicism, however, it is necessary to go back in time to consider French art and architecture, the attitudes and values underpinning its evolution and the developments contributing to its creation, this includes the social and political situation before the French Revolution, and the evolution of the French Academy of the Arts.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the office of the Director-General of Buildings, Gardens, Arts, Academies and Royal Manufacturing of the king, with responsibility for the academy and Salon exhibitions and all royal commissions for buildings, sculptures and paintings, initiated important changes in art. The Royal Luxembourg Palace in Paris became a public art museum and through commissions and acquisitions of serious work, history painting revived.[65] The government role in directing and influencing the nature and style of art did not end there however. Director-general D'Angiviller, commissioned a series of monumental sculptures of the great men of Paris, intended to inspire youth to virtue and high achievement, pride and patriotism.[66]

The history of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture began in1648, when Louis XIV set up the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture. Its purpose was to supplement the practical training of artists and to elevate them from unlettered tradesmen to an academic body. The Academy wanted artists to appreciate Greek and Roman sculptures, regarded as "the fountainhead of the Western

[64] See Hugh Honour, 1968 *Neo-classicism* Penguin Books, GB, pps.26-27.
[65] Ibid, p.41.
[66] Ibid.

artistic tradition."[67] The Academy ran into some difficulties in this endeavor because it was difficult for uneducated artists to comply with these requirements. For many years, they refused to speak at all, but eventually they gained enough knowledge to talk about the theory and practice of art.[68] There were also regular Academy exhibitions in the Louvre, which provided artists with the opportunity to show their work in public, and for the public to view modern art. It was at these early eighteenth century Salon exhibitions that modern art criticism came into being.

In 1745 under Louis XV, major changes occurred within the royal bureaucracy. These included the appointment of Lenormant de Tournehem, who became the Directeur Générale des Bâtiments du Roi in the office of the Director-General of Buildings, Gardens, Arts, Academies, and Royal Manufacturing. He oversaw changes to French art inspired by the Enlightenment, at a time when

a sober mood had overtaken society as the elements that would ultimately lead to the outbreak of the French Revolution became apparent. Food shortages, a political system that excluded a rapidly growing and increasingly wealthy middle class, and an intellectual climate dominated by the *philosophes* preaching social and political reform, and the sober mood in society was commented on by Petra ten-Doesschate, an authority on nineteenth century art.[69]

The *philosophes,* had a considerable influence on French art, which was facilitated by Madam de Pompadour herself, whom, Petra ten-Dosschate reports, was the mistress of Louis XV, and the main protector of the *Encyclopéde,* which contained many new ideas about the social function of art. Her role in the development of neoclassicism is significant. She took a proactive role in educating her brother in the classics in preparation for his role as the successor of the Directeur Générale des Bâtiments du Roi.

In relation to the emergence of neoclassicism, Madame de Pompadour played an important role in establishing it in France. Her brother, the marquis de Marigny, under her instruction, undertook training with the artist Charles Antoine Coypel (1694–1752), Director of the Royal Academy and chief painter to the king.[70] He embarked on a grand tour of Italy for 25 months from December

[67] Ibid.
[68] Jacqueline Lichtenstein, 1993 *The Eloquence of Color Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age* (trans. Emily McVarish) University of California Press Berkeley and Los Angeles California. pages. 138-147.
[69] Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, 2012 *Nineteenth-Century European Art* (3rd edition.) Prentice Hall, NJ, USA, p.99.
[70] Ian Chilvers, 2009 *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* Oxford University Press, UK, p.153.

1749 until autumn 1751. The architect Soufflot and the Abbe Leblane accompanied him, and under their tutelage he became a fervent admirer of classical antiquity. It is likely that he met Joseph-Marie Vien while in Rome.

Joseph-Marie Vien was in Rome from 1744 to 1750, when the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii were taking place and generating considerable excitement among artists.[71] According to art historian Thomas Crow, director of the Getty Research Institute Vien, "…was the leading advocate of a reform of art towards greater archaeological classicism and under Vien's administration it dominated the academy."[72] He became Jacques-Louis David's painting teacher in 1765.

Before continuing with the discussion on Jacques-Louis David's life and art, it is necessary to finish the current discussion concerning the Marquis de Marigny.

After his tour of Italy, the Marquis de Marigny, now a devotee of neo-classicism returned from his grand tour in 1751 and took up the post of Directeur Générale des Bâtiments du Roi. He held that post until 1773, during which time the new style of neo-classicism came into being.

The office encouraged the revival of history painting, and created a public art museum in the Royal Luxembourg Palace in Paris. It became the first public painting gallery in Paris, containing the king's art collection, which comprised many great works of art, including Titian's *The Madonna of the Rabbit*, Leonardo's *Holy Family*, and over one hundred other old masters' works. Artists were encouraged to visit the gallery and to study the old masters there.

Jacques-Louis David

At this point, the painter Jacques-Louis David (*b*. Paris, 30 August 1748; *d*. Brussels, 29 December 1825), and Delacroix's predecessor by sixty-seven years, may now be introduced. The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists describes him as a "French history painter and portraitist, the greatest of neo-classical painters, and one of the most influential European artists of his time."[73]

Jacques-Louis David's name is synonymous with eighteenth century neo-classicism. Historian

[71] Ibid, p.658.
[72] Thomas Crow 1995 *Emulation David, Drouais, and Girodet in the Art of Revolutionary France* Yale University Press, USA, p.8.
[73] Ian Chilvers (4th edition 2009) *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* Oxford University Press USA page 166

Alfred Cobban summarised aspects of David's career and his role in the development of neoclassicism. He pointed out the importance of the French Academy at Rome, which was the centre from which Davidian classicism emerged and spread. David went there, having won the Prix de Rome in 1774, and became involved in the Salon of 1785. There he exhibited the *Oath of the Horatii* and received great critical acclaim for it. This is arguably his most famous painting and its impact made him the leader of revolutionary art. He put his artistic genius to the service of the Revolution and became a member of the Jacobin Club, which commissioned him to paint the Tennis Court Oath on its first anniversary. He never finished it and "put his talents to use for the revolutionary cause…..designed the decorations and costumes for the elaborate public festivals .. that were a major part of …revolutionary cultural propaganda…"[74] Politics and political art made ever increasing demands on him. Throughout the period of the French revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, he was to all intents and purposes the artistic director of France.[75]

Jacques-Louis David used strong vertical and horizontal lines as the main structural features in the compositions of his early classical paintings with great success. *The Oath of the Horatii* (1784), the *Death of Socrates* (1787), and the *Lictors Bringing to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons* (1789) represented values and ideologies such as moral integrity, patriotism, and willingness to die for the state, expressed in the subject matter, and in the verticality and horizontality of the composition. Line was an essential element in these works and required great skill. It was a skill artists developed to a high standard by drawing from countless plaster copies of Greek and Roman sculptures during their training. Line symbolised the masculine virtues, strength, vigour and rectitude. Until the 1790s therefore, it had been "assumed that literature and the visual arts had reached unsurpassable peaks of excellence in classical antiquity when a mimetic theory of the arts prevailed and music was still regarded as an inferior means of artistic expression."[76]

The Davidian school associated the depiction of heroic themes with classicism, or as they were called then, the Greek Style or 'true style'. Heroic themes, drawn from the past, particularly antiquity and the medieval period were acceptable choices and provided the aesthetic and

[74] Jeremy Popkin 2010 *A Short History of the French Revolution* (5th edn.) Prentice Hall USA page 84
[75] Alfred Cobban, 1963 *A History of Modern France*, *Volume 1: 1715–1799 Old Regime and Revolution* Penguin Books, GB, pp. 179-180.

[76] Hugh Honour, 1979 *Romanticism* Westview Press, USA, p.12.

symbolic framework for addressing the moral concerns of the present time. David and his followers endowed the leaders of the French Revolution, the Republic and the Napoleonic Empire with all the grandeur and status of the heroes of antiquity.

One of David's most moving paintings, *Belisarius Begging for Alms* (1781) is a representative example of Davidian classicism with an important moral message. Belisarius was the Byzantine Emperor Justinian's favourite general who enabled Justinian's extensive conquests.[77] Unfortunately, the emperor believed false rumours of his treason and had him blinded and exiled.

The painting is an austere and powerful image depicting the blind Belisarius seated against a massive Greco-Roman column with the child who helps and guides him, together reaching their hands out begging for alms. A woman stops before them giving them money from her open purse. Behind her, a soldier who had campaigned with Belisarius holds up his hands in surprised recognition. The monumental architectural setting emphasises the desperate plight of a great man unjustly punished by his emperor.

Thomas Crowe, Professor of Art History at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, argues that this painting, David's first for the Salon, "…began to probe the potential of traditionally classical subject matter to exploit the new dissenting construction of patriotism," and to support those who believed reform was necessary to put the monarchy back on secure foundations.[78]

Hugh Honour, eminent art historian, writer and fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, in his book on romanticism described neoclassicism as a "regenerative movement, an attempt to purify the arts and to create a style of universal relevance, and eternal validity, deeply influenced by its anti-Rococo origin."[79]

In his book: *Neo-classicism* (1968) Hugh Honour said that the "flickering highlights and impulsive nervous modelling which gave Rococo painting its subtlety and sparkle – was sacrificed for the sake of firm and unequivocal contours and bold areas of flat paint. The diagonal gave way to the

[77] Stephen F. Eisenman, 2011 *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* Thames & Hudson Ltd., London, UK, p.23.
[78] Thomas Crowe, "Patriotism and Virtue: David to the Young Ingres" in Stephen F. Eisenman, 2011 *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* p.23.
[79] Hugh Honour 1979 *Romanticism* Westview Press, USA, p.16.

rigidly frontal view."[80]

Neo-classicism or classicism was a departure from the courtly styles of baroque and rococo. The emphasis on science and rationality combined with a new tone of moral seriousness engendered by the French Enlightenment, and the injunctions from Winckelmann to imitate antiquity as the only way to become great and to "dip their brush in intellect."[81]

The circumstances leading to the rise of neoclassicism were beneficial for artists. During this period, their role and status changed from decorating exquisite interiors for royals, such as Louis XIV, to becoming important actors in spreading values, theories and ideas. The court of Louis XV played an important role in the elevation of artists, and in the development of neoclassicism, under the guiding hand of Madame de Pompadour and her uncle, Lenormant de Tournehem, director of the Royal Buildings, Gardens and Decorations.

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'One of the interesting tenets of the Enlightenment related to the evaluation of rulers. This tenet stated that the greatness of rulers showed in the works of art and literature produced under them rather than by their territorial conquest. As a result, academies around the world increased in number from nineteen in 1720 to over 100 by 1790. They became the main schools for training young artists, whose studies included more theory and less craftsmanship. This led to a demand for public museums, and in 1750, some rooms in the Luxembourg Palace, hung with over 100 paintings and drawings, opened to the public twice a week but they were accessible to the students any time.'[82]

The middle class believed in art education as a way of achieving:

> '"purer morality in the arts and in life"…. They became generous benefactors of the arts, frequented public exhibitions, which increased in frequency and in popularity over time. In Paris, the Salons attracted up to 700 visitors a day."'[83]

Artists were now to take on a didactic role, by creating works of art that encouraged virtue and

[80] Hugh Honour 1968 Neo-classicism Penguin Books UK page 20
[81] Ibid, pps. 20-21.
[82] Ibid, p.85.
[83] Ibid pp. 87–88.

condemned vice.[84] Classical heroes in austere settings imbued with 'universal truths' to counteract Watteau's idyllic rococo landscapes and the elegant dalliances of leisured aristocrats.

Robert Rosenblum, author of the influential volume of essays in *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* (1967), begins the discussion of the emergence of neoclassicism with an early example of changing tastes. He refers to Joseph-Marie Vien's painting, *Selling of Cupids* (Salon of 1763), based on a painting discovered at Herculaneum. The antique painting depicted a cupid seller in an indoor environment. They drew walls and furniture in clean geometric divisions and simplified unbroken contours.

Vien's painting, described as a "rigorous imitations of the antique",[85] became very popular. Other artists such as Fuseli and Jacques-Louis David imitated it.[86]

Rosenblum however suggests that when artists imitated this painting, they embellished its "relatively primitive austerity"[87], with elements of the preceding style—rococo. The sobriety and austerity that defined eighteenth century classicism in Jacques-Louis David's subsequent paintings came later.

The term 'neoclassicism' refers to the revival of interest in antiquity, around the mid-eighteenth century. It is a term used by scholars to differentiate between the eighteenth century classical revival and the classical revival of the Florentine Renaissance where artists and writers simply referred to Classicism as the 'true style.'

Robert Rosenblum in *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* discusses the difficulties of defining neo-classicism, which he described to be "fully various and contradictory"[88] and not limited to the production of "imitations of Greco-Roman antiquity."[89] Rosenblum here seeks to remind us that defining styles in art it difficult and open to many interpretations. However, it is not the aim of this work to cover all the variations of neo-classicism, because it would require a thesis entirely to itself. Instead, the aim is to consider neo-classicism's role in the context of the changing socio political context of the time, the changing European attitudes to the birth of modern Greece and the

[84] Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu, 2012 *Nineteenth Century European Art* (3rd edn.) Prentice Hall, London, UK, p.41.
[85] Robert Rosenblum, 1967 *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* Princeton University Press, USA, p. 5.
[86] See reproductions in Robert Rosenblum 1967 *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* from p.203.
[87] Ibid page 4
[88] Ibid p. 4.
[89] Ibid p.3

role of the Grecian revival in this context. The meaning of imitations of Greco-Roman antiquity as it applies to this thesis relates to the actual imitation of mainly classical Greek sculpture in the training of artists.

Therefore, among these various descriptions of neo-classicism, it could be productive to consider the meaning of the term 'classical' as it applied to actual works of art and literature produced in Greco-Roman antiquity. These were works deemed to possess an absolute value. They represented the standard by which all works of art were judged.[90] Such a description explains in part Delacroix' self-definition as "pur classique" when he disputed he was a romantic in 1824.

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The eighteenth century was not the first time a modern society looked to antiquity for moral and political guidance. The Florentines, on the verge of the Renaissance, had looked to ancient Rome for guidance on forms of good government, social organisation and humanist thought. This enabled them to transform education, and social and political organisation in medieval Florence.

The French middle class of that period, like the Florentines, also turned to antiquity and the values of the Roman republic in the search for moral guidance.

There are interesting parallels between the classical revival in fifteenth-century Florence and the classical revival in eighteenth-century Europe. These parallels include the search for ideas on good governance and a return to the classics in politics, literature, science and art. There are also differences.

The Florentines looked more to Rome in the fifteenth century and considered the art and ideas they were studying as Greco-Roman, with the emphasis on Rome.

In the eighteenth century, Greece played a bigger role, becoming more visible, after centuries of obscurity under the Ottoman Empire, as the neo-classical revival or, alternatively, the International Grecian Movement spread. A range of factors brought it about. They included archaeological discoveries during excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii, archaeological tourism to Greece and the work of Joachim Johan Winckelmann. Winckelmann, who is now regarded as the first

[90] John Boardman, Jasper Griffin & Oswyn Murray, 1986 *The Oxford History of the Classical World* Oxford University Press, UK, p.1.

modern art historian wrote in his influential pamphlet published in 1755, *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*. It was where he first expressed the idea that Roman art and architecture copied Greek originals and he came to this conclusion, because of the 'naturalness' he observed in Greek representations of the human figure.

On the international political front, perhaps some of the most significant events are in relation to the rise of Greece's visibility concern the weakening of the Ottoman Empire and the spread of the French and Greek Enlightenment.

There were also other factors contributing to the growing interest in modern Greece. These included the publication in 1762, of *The Antiquities of Athens* by James Stuart and Nicholas Revett with the support of the British Society of the Dilettante.

On a less laudable level, there was also the wholesale plunder of priceless collections of Grecian marbles, resulting from the European craze for collecting antiquities that began in earnest during the early nineteenth century. The greatest desecration committed by avid collectors was the destruction of the Parthenon by Lord Elgin in 1801 – 3. Such events "convinced people that the centre of European civilization had shifted decisively east from Rome to Athens."[91]

These activities were part of a widespread Hellenic revival that not only led to the creation of neo-classical art and architecture but also to a widespread shift towards female nudity in painting. This was quite a departure from the typical male nude study of classical antiquity. The male nude had always been the chief subject of classical art[92] but in the manifestation of neo-classicism that emerged during the eighteenth century in painting, influenced by the Grecian revival, female nude or semi-nude depictions abounded. Jacques-Louis David, the architect of eighteenth century neo-classicism remained loyal to the classical ideal of male nudity, of which a striking example is his *Leonidas at Thermopylae* (1798 -1814), but on the other hand, another of his great works, *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* (1796-1799) includes numerous female nudes.

The neo-classical revival began with a political agenda created around ideas about good government and moral behavior based on the writings of great Roman and Greek thinkers such as

[91] See F. Haskell Chios, *The Massacres* and Delacroix in John Boardman and C.E. Vaphopoulo-Richardson (eds.) 1986 *Chios a Conference at the Homerion in Chios 1984* Clarendon Press, Oxford, UK, p.339.
[92] Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, 2012 *Ninteenth Century European Art* (3rd edn.) Prentice Hall, USA, p.209.

Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Cicero, Plutarch and Seneca. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and led to the politicization of style and taste in art.

The historian, Alfred Cobban, referred to the role of classical education in shaping revolutionary ideology, arguing:

> "If we want to understand the revolutionaries we must remember above all that they had been nurtured on a classical education. Robespierre, when asked what constitution he wanted, replied 'That of Lycurgus'. Plutarch, Livy Tacitus. They were their teachers; Brutus the consul, Brutus the tyrannicide, and Cincinnatus their models. They wore Phrygian caps, built triumphal arches, and erected statues – usually from not very durable plaster – to all the classical virtues, crowned their heroes with laural wreaths, converted the appropriately classical church of Saint Genevieve into a Pantheon to hold the mortal relics of their prophets and martyrs, and if they had to die, did it when they could in the old Roman fashion. They were to have senates and councils of ancients, bearers of the fasces, consuls, and in due course, an emperor."[93]

Cobban's summary therefore, of the role of classical education in revolutionary ideology and its pervasiveness in the day-to-day lives of people living in Revolutionary France could not but imbue artists with a political outlook.

Romanticism

After the French Revolution and the fall of the Napoleonic Empire, a sense of disillusionment assailed French society. The faith in rationalism, reason and humanism, the ideals of nobility and grandeur, and the primacy of aesthetic ideals, the pursuit of classical order, clarity and harmony, and depictions of nobility, grandeur and virtue had lost their appeal. Neoclassicism was on the way out by the early nineteenth century.[94]

Francis Claudon, author of the *Concise Encyclopedia of Romanticism* writes that the term romantic comes from "tales of chivalry and the romances of the troubadours."[95] Romantic was a word used in English to describe landscapes, ruins of buildings or any scene that stimulated the imagination. It was usually associated with the irrational and as a counteraction to the rationality and reason of the eighteenth century French Enlightenment.

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[93] Alfred Cobban 1963 *A History of Modern France Volume 1: 1715–1799 Old Regime and Revolution* Penguin Books, GB, pp. 179-180.

[94] Ian Chilvers, 2009 *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* Oxford University Press, pps. 436, 537.

[95] Francis Claudon 1980 *The Concise Encyclopedia of Romanticism* Chartwell Books Inc., New Jersey, USA, p.7.

William Vaughn in *Romanticism and Art*, identifies the first romantics as the German critics and brothers, August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, who published romantic poetry in a magazine called *Athenaeum* in 1798. Vaughn writes that romantics "…believed the modern world to be spiritually incompatible with that of classical antiquity."[96]

The romantic interest in medieval history led romantics to explore hitherto neglected mythologies and narratives. They wanted to generate a sense of ethnic and national identity that had roots in the distant past, to revive interest in Gothic architecture and to explore religious mysticism. [97] The romantics emphasized the primacy of imagination, individual perception and emotional expressiveness. This view contrasted starkly with the version of neo-classicism that emerged in the post-revolutionary and post Napoleonic era. The Bourbon Restoration, which took office twice, in 1814 and again in 1815 after the final defeat of Napoleon, was not averse to adopting their painting styles, but in their hands it was simply a propaganda tool taken from the past and pasted onto a vastly different present. The restoration, with its agenda to turn back the clock to a pre-revolutionary past, reduced neo-classicism to static compositions and threadbare statements of morality.

Romanticism emerged from the ideological ashes of the Enlightenment, the Napoleonic Empire and the return of the monarchy. There were no promises of moral clarity. Instead, cultural ambiguity took over and artists turned inward. Among progressive artists, the reaction against classical perfection and its association with the excesses of the Revolution resulted in a growing belief in the value of individual experience and self-expression, the value of intuition and instinct. This first became evident in literature around the late eighteenth century and later emerged in French art around 1819, where it coincided with the exhibition of Théodore Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (1819) which in France, ushered in the romantic era. The story of the shipwreck in 1816 of a government frigate en route to Africa inspired Théodóre Géricault to create the painting. The ship did not carry enough lifeboats and when it started to sink the poorer travelers were denied access to lifeboats and instead put on a raft, attached to the lifeboats with ropes. These ropes soon broke and set the raft adrift. The raft, which had originally set out with one hundred and fifty men on

[96] William Vaughn 1978 *Romanticism and Art* Thames & Hudson Ltd., London, UK, p.9.
[97] Hatt and Klonk associate the rise in secularism in current contemporary art with the abandonment of artistic concerns for the "articulation of the highest ideals" [2006: 36], a concern that was central to the thinking of Romantic artists.

board, twelve days later carried only fifteen survivors. The survivors had experienced intense hunger, dehydration and thirst and in desperation had resorted to cannibalism. The story of the survivors became headline news and embarrassed the government, exposing the captain of the '*Medusa'* to public condemnation.

The *Raft of the Medusa* was a painting with a grim message about human desperation, depravity, survival and redemption and brought Géricault's art "closer to realism."[98] The realism Frederick Antal speaks of here refers to the next great art movement that emerged in France in the mid-nineteenth century and spread throughout Europe.

The term realism in relation to art though has various meanings. It can mean it is strongly imitative of nature and good examples are the drawings and paintings of botanists who depict in painstaking detail every feature of the plant they are studying. In terms of visual art however, meaning of the term 'realism' varies. It includes the realism of classical Greek art, which, in comparison with the art and sculpture of societies that preceded the art of classical Greece was an art that seemed completely natural. In the nineteenth century context however, realism came to mean the unvarnished, realistic depiction of figures without any attempt to make them beautiful. In the case of both Delacroix's and Géricault's signature romantic works, *'Scenes from the Massacres at Chios..*' and the '*Raft of the Medusa'* respectively they were perceived at the time to be too realistic and too natural, whereas to our eyes they are clearly romantic works, aesthetically pleasing in ways that the shocking realism of later artists diverge from.

Frederick Antal provides a lengthy segment on Géricault in *Reflections on Classicism and Romanticism*, where he writes that 'Géricault possessed a sincere humanitarian outlook and loved the world around him, things like horseracing, soldiers, and circuses'.[99] Géricault chose Carle Vernet as his first master, a genre painter, who worked on small canvases "depicting contemporary social scenes, horseraces, dances and mere fashion"[100] and went on to Pierre-Narcisse Guérin's studio where he met the young Delacroix, seven years his junior.

Géricault received classical training there. He copied not only Raphael and Poussin but also Titian,

[98] Frederick Antal, 1996 *Reflections on Classicism and Romanticism* Routledge Kegan Paul Ltd, London p.33.
[99] Ibid, p.33.
[100] Ibid p.29.

Veronese, Correggio, Caravaggio, Rubens, Velasquez, Rembrandt and Fabritius.

He began with military subjects in his first years and continued with genre paintings of rearing horses and other animals. He 'democratised' his painting with paintings of Napoleon's troops fighting without the Emperor. That is, he did not depict heroes: he painted ordinary people instead. He studied anatomy and concentrated studies of nature. He went to Rome for a year and produced a number of mythological compositions full of movement and colour. Géricault believed that his genre paintings were just as important as history painting. His view of history painting represented a significant departure from convention. Ian Chilvers, author of the *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists,* describes history painting in these terms:

> "A term applied to pictures showing figures involved in momentous or morally edifying scenes, treated in a suitably grand and noble way…..and is applied not only to pictures representing actual historical events but also to appropriate subjects from legend and literature……for centuries, from the Renaissance onwards, history painting was generally considered the highest branch of art, to which the 'Grand Manner' was appropriate."[101]

After Géricault returned from Italy, however, he produced '*The Raft of the Medusa'*, a spectacular history painting but with contemporary subject matter, which established his fame and his significant place in art history.

Géricault made numerous, very exact studies for this painting. He interviewed the survivors of the '*Medusa'*, and portrayed each one individually, highlighting their suffering. He had a model built of the raft and spent a lot of time on the coast, studying and observing the atmosphere, wave movements and cloud formations. He permitted Delacroix to see this painting in progress and used him as a model for one of the figures on the raft.

Géricault referred to the naturalism of Raphael and Caravaggio in the construction of the '*Medusa'* and succeeded in making the finished picture "more naturalistic within a new modern rational content." According to Antal this painting paved the way for more explicit naturalism in the future .[102]

Delacroix's first great romantic painting, '*Scenes from the Massacres at Chios..'* five years later in 1824, was also subjected to critical ire when it was first shown at the Salon of 1824. It was at this

[101] Ian Chilvers 2009 *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* (fourth edition) Oxford University Press New York page 295
[102] Ibid, p.37.

exhibition that the passionate conflict between the classicists and the romantics broke out.

Conflict between classicists and romantics

In the meantime, in France, an intense debate began over the competing merits between classicism and romanticism with Ingres and Delacroix respectively representing classicism and romanticism during the Salon of the Musée Royal on 25 August 1824. It was a landmark exhibition for Delacroix albeit a painful one. On that date, '*Scenes from the Massacres at Chios..'* generated a "storm of controversy."[103] In contrast, the '*Vows of Louis XIII*' contributed by Jean-Auguste Dominic Ingres, received general approval.

These two distinctly different paintings represented two opposites on the spectrum between romanticism and classicism. Ingres' painting of the '*Vows of the Louis XIII*' was a commissioned work depicting a past event in French history, meticulously carried out in the classical style in which Ingres excelled. The painting has a shallow depth of field. The principal figures, the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child in her arms stands at the top of the canvas floating on clouds symbolizing heaven, while the supplicant king kneels below with his arms stretched upward towards the Virgin and child in a gesture symbolizing the dedication his throne to them. Both figures appear to exist on the same flat surface.

Delacroix's '*Scenes from the Massacres at Chios..'* however implies greater depth of field. The lower front of the canvas contains numerous figures sitting and lying in static disarray. These are the figures that attract the attention of the viewer because they are the largest, most numerous and most detailed figures. Behind them significant depth of field and distance is evoked by the small size of the numerous warring figures and horses, occupying a much smaller surface area of the canvas. Even further back in the distance, the minutely depicted harbor is in flames. Unlike Ingres' painting of a historical event in the distant past, Delacroix's painting depicts a recent, contemporary event, chosen by him for the Salon of 1824. His painting lacks the traditional historic grandeur of Ingres' painting but in its place, Delcroix paints the dignity and despair of ordinary people, victims of the inhumanity war. His color is dramatic and his technical approach rough and incomplete to

[103] See Elizabeth A. Fraser, 2004 Delacroix *Art and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France* Cambridge University Press, UK, p.39.

eyes accustomed to the transparent polished smoothness of neo-classicism. Nevertheless, its shortcomings, as perceived by contemporary critics, were the very features that represented the chaos and disorder of life in the throes of dramatic multifaceted social and political change. '*Scenes from the Massacres at Chios'* a romantic painting heralded the future, and the classical '*Vows of the Louis XIII*' looked to the past.

It was at the Salon of 1824 therefore, that the division between classicists and romantics came to the surface, and it may have influenced David Wakefield to assert that this exhibition "…marked the first real manifestation of the French Romantics in painting, "[104] It is necessary to add here that the underlying social struggle, which was the struggle between conservatives and progressives, between the past and the future, between progress and regression into an imaginary halcyon past, provided a template for enlarging the differences between classicism and romanticism in art and attaching conflicting political and social meanings to each style.

It is therefore unsurprising that, Andrew Carrington Shelton described the Salons of 1824 and 1827–28 as "red letter dates", which "ignited the rivalry" between Delacroix and Ingres.[105] The critic Stendhal wrote a detailed critique of that exhibition. His review of *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, while quite negative, did not prevent an enduring friendship forming between them, especially as Delacroix made a point of writing to him after this and other reviews of his work. The argument between the classicists and the romantics polarized artists into two warring factions and presented each position as an 'unavoidable choice between two alternatives".[106] In reality, the opposing stances in theoretical and ideological positions between classicism and romanticism could not account for the wide variety of aesthetic and stylistic changes in painting. Nevertheless artists and critics alike took up antagonistic positions for or against romanticism or classicism and this debate dominated critical discourse on French painting from 1824 onwards. The boundaries and differences between them were not as great as the factionalism between the two groups suggested, and Delacroix did not describe himself as a romantic at this time, but ever since, '*Scenes from the Massacres at Chios'* has always been designated a romantic painting.

[104] See Wakefield, D. (ed.) 1973 *Stendhal and the Arts* Phaidon Publishers Inc., New York, p. 21.
[105] Andrew Carrington Shelton, 2000 'Art History', Association of Art Historians, Vol. 23, No. 5, p. 278.
[106] Ibid

The salon of 1824 continued to play a crucial role in the discourse between classicists and romantics and despite his protests that he was pure classique, effectively established Delacroix's fame.[107]

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The main issue over which classicists and romantics fought was the debate over the role of line versus the role of colour in painting. The intensity of the conflict and its longevity points to a deep-seated division between the proponents of each style. This was not the first time that such conflict had erupted in the Parisian art world. Two hundred years earlier a similar conflict occurred over the relative merits of the respective styles of Peter Paul Rubens and Nicolas Poussin[108]. The recurring tension and conflict among artists, over stylistic matters since the mid seventeenth century began with a dispute, described here as the dispute between reason and emotion.[109]

In the simplest possible terms, the first stage of the conflict was a passionate disagreement between platonic rationality, attributed to the art of Nicolas Poussin, and emotion, associated with the flamboyance and colour, in the art of Peter Paul Rubens. When the tensions between competing merits of classicism versus romanticism emerged in the Salon of 1824, it appears that Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres replaced Nicolas Poussin as the champion of reason and rationality and Eugène Delacroix replaced Paul Rubens as the torchbearer of feeling and emotion. The dualism that bedeviled artistic style in France from the seventeenth century on was the dualism that emerged in society whenever radical social change takes place. Rubens, the great baroque artist represented the counter-reformation with its celebration of life, while Poussin reflected back to the era of Plato and the rejection of emotion and colour as shadows of reality. [110]

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It appears that Delacroix felt divided between rationality and emotion. He painted passionate, brilliantly coloured sensuous romantic paintings but was reluctant to don the mantle of romanticism. He denied he was a romantic and asserted that he was purely classical. This was his

[107] Ibid, pp. 277–278.
[108] Chilvers Ian *The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* Oxford University Press 2009 page 498
[109] Ibid
[110] Lichtenstein Jacqueline *The Eloquence of Colour Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age* (Translator Emily McVarish) University of California Press Berkeley 1993 pages 147 - 149

response when greeted as the “Victor Hugo of painting” by the librarian of the Chamber of Deputies.[111] Delacroix’s declaration in 1824—that he was pure “classique”. His inner conflict between the clarity, linear certainty and stability of antiquity in the neoclassical style, and the emotional tumult generated by colour, shadow and tone in romanticism seems to be a reflection of the dramatically changing world in which he lived, gripped by the struggle between the traditionalists who resisted change and progressives who embraced the future.

Ingres was a traditionalist and utterly certain of his position. He was an adherent of Raphael and Poussin and believed in the supremacy of line. Line traditionally represented the masculine, such as Apollo, the sun god, who embodied truth, purity, rationality, certainty, universality and order. Line was virtuous, and classicists were convinced that heroic and perfect harmony and beauty in art were only achievable through line.

Delacroix however was a colourist. His preferences were associated with Michelangelo and Rubens, and he did not appear to be concerned by the disparaging association of colour, with the feminine, and the heretical. Advocates of line or (neo-classicism) associated colour with the appeal to the senses and not to reason. Colour was impure, transient variable, irrational and corrupt. It appealed to the ‘uneducated unrefined masses’. It was populist, seductive and sensual. It promoted chaos. Colour was associated with Dionysian abandon and sensuality, while line was associated with the rationality and masculine strength of Apollo.[112] [113]

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Throughout Delacroix’s life, France was in a state of social and political upheaval[114]. His art and that of his contemporaries, in the divisions and conflicts over style, particularly in the bitter division among over classicism versus romanticism, reflected the chaos, uncertainty and destructiveness of ongoing social change and the deepening political polarization between Liberals and conservatives. It is therefore not surprising that controversy greeted many of his paintings,

[111] André Joubin (ed.), *Delacroix, Journal*, 1822–1863 quoted in James H. Rubin, ‘Delacroix and Romanticism’ in Beth S. Wright (ed.) 2001 *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* p. 196.
[112] Lichtenstein, Jacqueline *The Eloquence of Colour Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age* (Translator Emily McVarish) University of California Press Berkeley 1993 pages 48 - 49
[113] Haskell Francis *Past and Present in Art and Taste Selected Essays* Yale University Press 1987 pages 66 - 67
[114] Social and political unrest led to the revolution of 1830 that forced the abdication of Charles X. His successor Louis Philippe lasted a bit longer than he did, but revolution of 1848 ousted Louis-Philippe. The second republic was established, but overthrown in 1852 by the Second Empire, which lasted until 1870, seven years after the death of Delacroix.

although they tended to focus more on his distinctive personal style and not so much on his subject matter.[115] At the time, his brilliant, luminous and revolutionary colour,[116] and his decided preference for colour over line[117] aroused intense debate among critics and artists. He personally believed line was not a natural occurrence in nature, and that colour and tone were necessary to depict form, contour and volume in order to achieve a three dimensional illusion on the flat surface of the canvas.

These factors and Delacroix's bold and vigorous brushwork, the free and expressive quality of his drawing and his fascination for orientalism set him apart from many of his contemporaries. Essentially he and other experimental artists of his time, whether consciously or unconsciously, reflected the destabilization of the old familiar order and the emergence of the new and unpredictable order. This is visible in their radical new approaches to both style and subject matter in painting.

A diplomatic delegation

A significant event that transformed Delacroix's art and his life was his visit to North Africa in 1832.

Delacroix joined the diplomatic delegation to Morocco as a stimulating companion for its leader the Count Charles de Mornay. Mlle Mars, his mistress had asked M. Duponchel the director of the Opera to find a suitable companion for the Count. Armand Bertin of *Le Journal des Débats* recommended Delacroix to him and the invitation was issued to Delacroix, who accepted it with pleasure.

The delegation set out for Toulon on the 8th January1832, in the midst of a cholera epidemic in France.[118] King Louis-Philippe had instructed Charles de Mornay to conclude a treaty with the Sultan, Muley Abd-Er-Rahman of Morocco in order to alleviate tension between the French and

[115] Except in the case of *The Death of Sardanapalus* where the subject matter raised serious official objections and the threat of the withdrawal of royal patronage.
[116] Nowadays it is hard to appreciate the colour in Delacroix's paintings because they have deteriorated substantially, the result of his tendency to experiment and the availability of new, synthetic, untried pigments. To the modern eye, Delacroix's paintings ill bear comparison with the brilliant palette of the impressionists, who were actually greatly inspired by his paintings and ideas.
[117] The lengthy and bitter war between the advocates of line as opposed to the colourists underpinned the theoretical and philosophical conflict between the classicists (nowadays referred to as the neoclassicists) and the romantics, personified by the rivalry between Delacroix and Ingres. This topic is discussed in more detail in the chapters about the three great massacres: namely *The Massacres at Chios, The Death of Sardanapalus* and the *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople.*
[118] René Huyghe *Delacroix* (trans. from the French by Jonathan Griffin) 1963 Thames & Hudson, London, UK, p.266.

Moroccan governments[119] that had originated with Napoleon's near eastern campaigns in 1797, and which had disturbed the way of life of the Moslem lands of North Africa, making them hostile to European intrusion. They resented the colonial ambitions of France and the French presence in their lands.

In 1827 a confrontation occurred between France and Algeria called the 'fan affair', triggered by Hussein Dey, the ruler of Algeria, who asked the French consul, Pierre Duval, to pay a 28-year-old debt, which had been incurred by Napoleon's troops, to Algerian grain merchants. Pierre Duval refused to pay the debt. Hussein Dey responded by insulting him with a touch from his fan/fly whisk.

In response to this diplomatic insult, Charles X blockaded the port of Algiers for three years. A violent war erupted that culminated in the French conquest of the capital, Algiers, [120] and Louis-Philippe sent troops late in 1830 in an effort to conquer the whole of Algeria, which was not completed until 1847.

The Moroccan sultan demonstrated his displeasure with French expansionism by taking and holding in his ports, three French ships, originally taken by the Algerians. Regaining possession of these impounded ships was part of M. de Mornay's brief from the king. His brief also included establishing cordial relations between Morocco and France, negotiating regulations regarding commercial activities between them, and defining the borders of the new colony.[121]

The delegation arrived in Tangiers twenty-three days later on January the 25th 1832, to a spectacular welcome. In a letter to his friend J.B Pierret, he described the reception arranged by the Pasha to greet them as "…a superb reception, by local standards… with the Pasha surrounded by his soldiers, who played the 'most peculiar military music'". He found the 'Jewesses' "quite lovely… real pearls of Eden", adding regretfully that he was "…afraid it will be difficult to do more than paint them."[122] His assumption that he would find it difficult to do more than paint them was wrong, because it was impossible for him to gain any access to women until, after much effort, he

[119] Frank Anderson Trapp *The Attainment of Delacroix* 1970 Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA, pp. 112–113.
[120] Ibid, p.112.
[121] Barthélémy Jobert, *Delacroix* 1997 Princeton University Press, New Jersey USA, p.140.
[122] Jean Stewart (editor/translator) 1970 *Eugène Delacroix: Selected Letters 1813–1863* ArtWorks MFA Publications, Boston, USA, p. 181.

found a Jewish patriarch who allowed him to make some sketches of five women in his harem. The result was his celebrated, *Women of Algiers in their Apartments* (1834). It inspired later generations of notable painters, among them, Paul Gaugin and Pablo Picasso.

His success in entering a harem and drawing its occupants was a noteworthy achievement for a nineteenth century Christian man in a Moslem society, but it was probably not as significant as his response to the North African lifestyle, the appearance of the people, the brilliant light and the dramatic landscapes he observed. These things radically altered his use of colour, his rendition of form and his imaginative response to everything he saw around him. The brilliant Mediterranean sun, and the dress and lifestyle of the inhabitants of that region, changed his approach to colour and to classicism. His changed attitude showed in his writing:

> "The precious and rare influence of the sun which imparts a penetrating life to everything …the dignity and nobility of bearing of the contemporary Arabs [are comparable with] the ancient Greeks and Romans."[123]

Delacroix's aforementioned exposure to the brilliant light of the Mediterranean, and the striking appearance and lifestyle of the Berbers[124] fascinated him and transformed his art. He returned to Paris full of enthusiasm with a changed palette and a new range of subjects.

His powerful imagination converted the people, their clothing, demeanor and lifestyle into the Greeks and Romans of antiquity. Seen through Delacroix's eyes, the people of North Africa became the Greco-Roman heroes of antiquity. His letters are full of his astonished responses to these sights.

The six months that Delacroix spent in North Africa transformed his aesthetic outlook and reaffirmed his fascination with the East. He experienced his time in Morocco, Algiers and Meknes as a revelation of the classical past. Michele Hannoosh, an authority on Delacroix's writing, described Delacroix's visit to Morocco in 1832 as:

> "…an experience universally agreed to be of immeasurable importance for his life and work,…[the experience]…transformed his conception of light, colour, and form, and convinced him of the falsity of the neoclassical conception of the antique, specifically that of David….".[125]

[123]Lee Johnson, 1963 *Delacroix Masters and Movements* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, UK, p.61.

[124] The Berbers were the indigenous inhabitants of the region who had converted to Islam in the seventh century.

[125] Michele Hannoosh, 1995 *Painting and the Journal of Eugène Delacroix* Princeton University Press, New Jersey USA,

Another art historian and Delacroix scholar, Barthélémy Jobert shares Hannoosh's opinion, saying that the six months Delacroix spent in North Africa were a formative experience for him.

Hitherto Delacroix had acquired his knowledge of the East from secondhand sources such as other artist's works, prints, travel stories and artefacts collected by travellers and brought back to France. Before he went to North Africa, his paintings were the result of the study and imitation of secondary sources and his imagination.[126] The visit to North Africa changed that. Jobert observed:

> "…After the Moroccan trip he relied on lived experience, on deeply felt personal impressions. There is a clear break, as much thematic as stylistic, and the influence of these few months is considerable, touching all his work."[127]

Frank Anderson Trapp describes Delacroix's visit to North Africa and Spain in 1832 as a momentous event: "..... [it was his] first and only experience of an exotic environment, and it was a crucial one."[128] René Huyghe affirms this view:

> "What he expected was that the journey would bring him the revelation of a completely strange world which, like all the romantics, he had often dreamed – the East, a 'different' world in which he would find the shock of the new and the absence of the old traditions which had become stifling. What he found, in fact, was a true understanding of those traditions, a complete renewal of them. The obstacle that was still holding him up, the impossibility (as it seemed at that time) of uniting romanticism and classicism, was about to vanish, and a fresh, surprising reality would show him their natural union."[129]

In February 1832, he wrote to his close friend Pierret:

> "Imagine, my friend, what it is like to see lying in the sun, walking about the streets, cobbling shoes, figures like Roman consuls, like Cato or Brutus, not even lacking that disdainful look which those rulers must have worn; these people possess only a single blanket, in which they walk about, sleep or are buried, and they look as satisfied as Cicero must have been in his curule chair. I tell you, you'll never be able to believe what I shall bring back, because it will be far removed from the natural truth and nobility of these men. There's nothing finer in classical art. Yesterday a peasant came by, got up like this [a sketch]. And this was what a wretched Moor looked like, begging for a handful of coppers a couple of days ago. All of them in white like Roman senators or Greeks at the Panathenaean festival."[130]

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p.86.
[126] Barthélémy Jobert 1997 *Delacroix* Princeton University Press USA page 140.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Frank Anderson Trapp The Attainment of Delacroix 1971 Johns Hopkins Press Baltimore USA p.111
[129] René Huyghe *Delacroix* (trans. from the French by Jonathan Griffin) 1963 Thames & Hudson London, p.267.
[130] Jean Stewart (ed. and trans.)1970 *Eugène Delacroix selected Letters 1813 - 1863* MFA Publications USA pages 187

These comments are a window on the workings of Delacroix's mind. Michele Hannoosh summarises them thus: "….his fascination with the East"…. and the east "….as a revelation of the classical past."[131]

As these Delacroix authorities, Lee Johnson, Michele Hannoosh, Frank Anderson Trapp and Rene Huyghe agree, Delacroix had found his way to the classicism of the Greeks of antiquity via the Berbers of North Africa. They share a consensus that his classicism did not emulate the style of Davidian neoclassicism, that in its early phase was the flag bearer of the idealism and optimism of the French Revolution, nor in its later form as the dominant style of the academy. It was the "true style" that came directly from the ancients.

After North Africa, the colour of his paintings became more vibrant, and more in tune with the great colourists Rubens, Titian and Velasquez. The freedom of romanticism, with its emphasis on imagination, colour and feeling, allowed him to connect what he saw in North Africa with, in the words of Johan Joachim Winckelmann, the "noble simplicity and calm grandeur" that he is so famouse for. Delacroix found noble simplicity and calm grandure epitomised in the demeanor and dress of the Moroccan inhabitants he observed.

He wrote to the editor of *Le Journal des Débats* on 2 April 1832 from Meknes, a city in Northern Morocco saying:

> "The picturesque is here in abundance. At every step one sees ready-made pictures which would bring fame and fortune to twenty generations of painters. You'd think yourself in Rome or Athens, minus the Attic atmosphere; the cloaks and togas and a thousand details are quite typical of antiquity. A rascal who'll mend the vamp on your shoe for a few coppers has the dress and bearing of Brutus or Cato of Utica"[132]

From Tangiers on 4th June he wrote to Auguste Jal, correspondent for *Le Constitutionnel*:

> "If you knew how peacefully men live under the scimitar of tyrants; above all, how little they are concerned about all the vanities that fret our minds! Fame, here, is a meaningless word; everything inclines one to delightful indolence; nothing suggests that this is not the most desirable state in the world. Beauty lies everywhere about one. It drives one to despair, and painting, or rather a frantic desire to paint, seems the greatest of follies. You have seen Algiers, and you can imagine what the natives of these regions are like. Here there is something even

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[131] Michele Hannoosh, 1995 *Painting and the Journal of Eugène Delacroix* Princeton University Press, New Jersey USA, p.86.

[132]

> simpler and more primitive; there is less of the Turkish alloy; I have Romans and Greeks on my doorstep: it makes me laugh heartily at David's Greeks, apart, of course, from his sublime skill as a painter. I know now what they were really like; their marbles tell the exact truth, but one has to know how to interpret them, and they are mere hieroglyphs to our wretched modern artists. If painting schools persist in setting Priam's family and the Atrides as subjects to the nurslings of the Muses, I am convinced, and you would agree with me, that they would gain far more from being shipped off as cabin boys on the first boat bound for the Barbary coast than from spending any more time wearing out the classic soil of Rome. Rome is no longer to be found in Rome."[133]

Here Delacroix finds the Greek ideal not in Greece or Rome but in North Africa. It is a striking response to the new, the strange and the exotic that he experienced for the first time. Art historian Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby quotes from a travel account of the late 1780s, which she believes "…. Delacroix had read …. argueing that contemporary Turks and not Greeks were now the embodiment of the noble *beau idéal*."[134]

Delacroix' philhellenism, exemplified in '*Scenes from the Massacres at Chios'* and '*Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi'* and his deep fascination with the oriental aspects of the Greek War of Independence, suggests he saw modern Greece as an oriental place. A significant portion of his oeuvre contains many examples of works based on oriental themes such as Byron's '*Giour and Hassan'*, and numerous drawings and paintings depicting Greek men dancing in costume. *The 'Death of Sardanapalus'* is acclaimed as the quintessential orientalist painting. Delacroix's biblical works, such as '*The Abduction of Rebecca'*, and the outstanding masterpiece from his North African soujourn, '*Women of Algiers in their Apartments', 'The Jewish Wedding*' and many others attest to his fascination for orientalism and the originality of his approach.

His "first major painting inspired by the North Africa journey"[135] '*Women of Algiers in Their Apartments'*, was exhibited in the Salon of 1834. Delacroix exclaimed on completion of this work, "C'est comme au temps d'Homère!" (It is like the time of Homer!). Lee Johnson describes this exclamation as Delacroix "complying with his own definition of classicism."[136] Gustave Planche

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[133] Jean Stewart (editor/translator), 1970 *Eugène Delacroix Selected Letters 1813–1863* MFA Publications, Boston USA, pp.193-194.

[134] Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, 'Whose colour was not black or white or grey, but an extraneous mixture, which no pencil may': Aspasie and Delacroix's Massacres of Chios, Art History ISSN 0141-6790, Vol. 22, No. 5, December 1999, pp. 676-704

[135] Lee Johnson, 1986 *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1832–1863 Moveable Pictures and Private Decorations* Volume III Text p.166.

[136] Ibid, p.167.

considered it the most brilliant achievement of Delacroix to date; his view was that it was pure painting, as art for art's sake, that excited him most of all. He described this work as "….paint and nothing more, paint free, vigorous, highly charged…"[137]

When Delacroix accepted the invitation to join the delegation to Morocco and Algiers, the experience, as discussed later in the thesis, transformed both him and his art, dramatically changing his style and subject matter. The visit established a dividing line between his paintings up until 1832 and everything he did afterwards.

[137] Lee Johnson, op.cit., pp.192–193.

CHAPTER 3
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES – "NEGLECT NOTHING THAT CAN MAKE YOU GREAT!"[138]

Introduction
From the French Revolution of 1789 to 1840

The French Revolutionary period was deeply engaged in wars with other countries in order to spread their philosophy widely throughout Europe. The following list of events comes from the timeline created by Professor Suzanne M. Desan for her course guidebook on the French Revolution and the age of Napoleon.[139]

The Revolutionaries began transforming France immediately. After the declaration of the National Assembly in 1789, there were major changes. These included the abolition of feudalism, seigneurial dues, tithes to the church and various other privileges. They promulgated the declaration of the rights of man and Citizen, nationalised Church lands to raise funds to pay off the national debt, abolished hereditary nobility noble titles, and established a Festival of Federation. There were many other important reforms such the declaration of women's rights, rights for all free people of colour, the legalisation of divorce, secularisation of civil record keeping and many other reforms.

Such far-reaching and utopian changes had their detractors and eventually French society began to divide, leading to paranoid fears among the leadership that resulted in the execution of thousands of people during the reign of terror.

Several wars were declared during this period. In April 1792, France declared war on Austria and Prussia joined the war in June. In 1793, France declared war on Great Britain and the Dutch Republic, and in 1796 Bonaparte was appointed general of the French Army in Italy and he began the Italian campaign. In 1798, Bonaparte went to Egypt where his campaigns were unsuccessful. He returned in November 1799 and seized power.

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[138] Delacroix wrote in his Journal on January 31st 1850 About Stendhal (Henri Beyle): "Poor Beyle once wrote to me: 'neglect nothing that can make you great'". Hubert Wellington (ed.) (trans. Lucy Norton. introduction Timothy Wilson-Smith) 1995 *Painter of Passion the Journal of Eugène Delacroix* Phaidon Press London. Page 96

[139] Suzanne M Desan 2013 Course number 8220 *Living the French Revolution and the Age of Napoleon* Course Guidebook The Teaching Company The Great Courses USA pages 349 - 351

Napoleon became commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and in 1799 was elected first Consul in a coup d état. His ambition drove him in continuing wars with Europe, and occupying state after state. It did not stop until he was defeated and exiled in 1814 and again in 1815.

The fall of Napoleon however did not bring peace to France. Instead, French citizens found themselves occupied by the allies. There were foreign troops on French soil where a brilliant Empire had recently flourished.

The Greek Revolution and Delacroix

At this time, Delacroix aged seventeen, was still an adolescent and an orphan, and traumatised by the recent loss of his mother, the loss of the family fortune, and left to the care of an elder sister also coming to terms with unexpected poverty. The effect of these traumatic events was bound to affect Delacroix emotionally, psychologically and artistically.

After Napoleon's defeat and exile to St Helena, the second restoration of the Monarch took place. Louis XVIII took office as the first constitutional monarch of France, "without faith and with very little hope"[140]

In the meantime, social tensions increased in France for the duration of the Greek War of Independence and beyond. The Greek struggle for freedom may have inspired them but domestic politics pre-occupied them, particularly as divisions between liberals and ultraconservatives widened further after the death of Louis XVIII in 1824 and the succession of his brother, the repressive, authoritarian, ultraconservative Charles X.

Charles X ran a violently counter revolutionary regime that inspired an unyielding hatred for the Restoration among progressives and liberals. Monarchists, such as Chateaubriand, defected to the liberal camp. An underground resistance headed by the liberals, which had emerged in response to the brutality and injustices of Charles X regime, culminated in the July 30 revolution of 1830, which forced the abdication of Charles X and established Louis-Philippe on the throne. Popularly known as the citizen king, he was the first constitutional and last hereditary monarch to rule France. He began his rule in a mild and conciliatory manner, but his moderate intentions were not

[140] Alfred Cobban 1961 *A History of Modern France Volume 2 From the first Empire to the Second Empire 1799 – 1871* Penguin Books UK Page 71.

enough to eliminate the sense of divine right he possessed as an hereditary monarch.

According to Paul Schroeder:

> The second restoration could not restore internal tranquillity to France. A royalist rebellion against Napoleon's usurpation, which had simmered in the south and the west during the Hundred days now burst into open flames, leading to a White Terror of Royalists against Bonapartists and Jacobins and of Catholics against Protestants."[141]

There were concerted efforts to turn back the clock to the pre-revolutionary era, by instituting a policy of "Compulsory Forgetting".

Elisabeth Fraser, professor of art history at the University of South Florida and specialist in the history of art from history of art during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, described the measures the Bourbon Restoration took to wipe out all memories of the Revolution and the Napoleonic empire. "'Compulsory forgetting' passed into law in 1815. It became unlawful to wear 'tricolour cockades carry tricolour flags, sing revolutionary songs or keep images of the usurper (Napoleon) or symbols of the Empire in public places"[142] She then added, "prefectures throughout France arranged public ceremonies to destroy memorabilia of previous, regimes"[143]. These repressive actions by the government became more draconian after the assassination, by a liberal sympathiser, of Louis XVIII's nephew and heir presumptive, the Duc de Berry, in 1820. After that, the king abandoned all pretence at moderation. He increased the scale of reprisals against revolutionaries and Bonapartists. After his death in 1824, the persecutions of Bonapartists, Jacobins and Protestants increased under the ultra-conservative rule of his brother Charles X.

The somewhat discursive narrative above is included to emphasise the background of fear chaos and violence surrounding the daily life of the artist. He captures the violence he encounters around him in his vividly tormented paintings, particularly the selected four paintings to create a parallel of the endless repetition of war and chaos in the lives of people throughout history.

By the time Charles X took the throne, in 1824, Delacroix had successfully shown at two major Salons, the Salon of 1822 and the Salon of 1824. In the latter Salon where he showed *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, he had, unintentionally and painfully for him, became notorious as a

[141] Paul W. Schroeder 1994 *The Transformations of European Politics 1763 – 1848* Oxford University Press USA p. 554
[142] Elizabeth Fraser 2004 Delacroix Art and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France Cambridge University Press Cambridge UK p.6-7
[143] Ibid

radical major artist with a series of scathing critical reviews to his name. At the age of twenty-six he was on his way to a successful career, but he was also in a state of political excitement. His philhellenism bourgeoned into dedicated liberalism and he remained a devotee of Napoleon, in spite of the persecution of Bonapartists by the new regime. Napoleon was the hero of Delacroix's generation. His "Nimbus of glory"[144] shone in a world bereft of heroes Suzanne M.Desan explained, in *Living the French Revolution and the age of Napoleon*, "the French Revolution did not create a pantheon of heroes or a set of founding fathers, such as those that emerged from the American Revolution….Napoleon was the only public personality that came close to a heroic figure and he was a polarising figure, either idealised or hated. Chateaubriand, Napoleon's long-time critic wrote on Napoleon's death – Napoleon gave up to God the most powerful breath of life that ever animated human clay".[145]

Delacroix maintained a lifelong admiration for Napoleon. In 1848 at the age of fifty, he wrote an article about Napoleon, which was published in the *Revue des deuc-mondes*. He described Napoleon thus. "…..as poetic as Achilles, greater than all of the heroes sprung from the poetic imagination, who has yet to find his Homer, and Homer himself would have given up any attempt to portray him."[146] Which was high praise indeed.

Napoleon died in exile in 1821, in the year in which the Greek War of Independence broke out. By then, life under the Bourbon Restoration had become almost intolerable for liberals and Bonapartists. Napoleon's demise created an emotional vacuum for Delacroix's generation. In the post Napoleonic world they inhabited, society appeared to be fragmenting and political rifts between conservatives and Liberals widened.

The impulse among conservatives to turn back the clock to some imagined past paradise was very strong. Equally strong among Liberals however, was the desire for freedom and civil rights, having briefly glimpsed a world of freedom, equality and justice that reigned during the first half of the Revolution.

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[144] Paul W. Schroeder 1994 *The transformations of European Politics 1763 – 1848* Oxford University Press USA p. 508
[145] Suzanne M. Desan 2013 *Living the French Revolution and the age of Napoleon* Course Guide Book (number 8220) The Teaching Company, The Great Courses USA page 329.
[146] Alan B. Spitzer 'Delacroix and his Generation,' in Beth S. Wright (ed.) 2001 *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* Cambridge University Press New York page 20.

Art also reflected the political struggle between opposing forces. Among artists, a divide had emerged between those who adhered to traditional canons of classicism and those who wanted a less prescriptive, and a more imaginative, expressive and independent approach to art. The idealism and certainty of classicism no longer answered for Delacroix and he and some of his cohort turned to romanticism. Most of them were Liberals and they were, to some extent, at odds with the new regime.

Delacroix made an effort, with his first salon painting, to comply with the style prescriptions of classicism, for history painting, and he was therefore quite successful with his first Salon entry in 1822, the *Barque of Dante*. The critics praised the painting fulsomely. The state purchased it, and a medal awarded to Delacroix.

In his next painting, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* (1824), he moved away from traditional form and turned his thoughts inward to explore the emotional and psychological landscape of his own mind and heart, and to employ his imagination as well as his reason. He wanted to paint his own century, to make art that dealt with the living present, with all its flaws and complexities. The critical response to this painting was harsher than he could have expected and he found himself in the middle of a major struggle among artists.

A detailed discussion on the conflict among French artist that polarised them ideologically and aesthetically, namely the division between artists favouring classicism and artist favouring romanticism is in chapter four.

With their world crumbling around them, French artists and particularly romantics like Delacroix, needed to build a new world for themselves out of the rubble of the past. Their focus was on the present and those aspects of the past that related to building identity and community.

Fortunately they did not have long to wait for new heroes to show them the way. Once the Greek War of Independence broke out, artists soon found new heroes to paint. Among the most glamorous of these was the aristocrat Lord Byron, whose torrid private life, his philhellenic public life, his passionate poetry and his love of Greece, both ancient and modern made him an eternal hero for Greeks and philhellenes.

Byron was a particularly profound inspiration for Delacroix. He was an avid reader of his poetry and he created many important works of art based on his poetry.

Other glamorous heroes that captured the imagination of French artists were the Klephts, (meaning thieves) who were described by the nineteenth century historian, James Emerson as "independent warriors, "[147] although in reality, they were thieves and bandits who lived in the mountains and stole from the peasantry. Despite that, the Klephts fitted the romantic image of dashing heroes, especially as one among them, a certain captain Markos Botzaris, who led the Suliotes. Described by William St Clair as a "semi-independent community of Albanians who had joined the Greeks"[148]

Markos Botzaris's death on the 21st of August 1823 resulting from his surprise attack on a Turkish encampment covered him in glory. According to David Brewer:

> "they made a daring attack on the encampment, with Botzaris leading his troops. Fatally wounded in the fight, his men concealed his death and continued to fight until dawn. Markos Botzaris's body was taken to Messolonghi and there given a magnificent funeral. His name had ever after been revered as a patriot and a heroic commander who died in battle for his men."[149]

Lord Byron found Albanians fascinating. He wore their national costume and equipped his army with that attire as their uniform. In 1813, Thomas Philips painted a famous portrait of Lord Byron in Albanian regalia. This portrait now hangs in the National Portrait gallery in London. The Albanian captain Markos Botzaris, certainly captured the imagination of Delacroix too. Delacroix worked for years on a painting about the death of Botzaris, but unfortunately the painting has been lost and only a fragment remains. Fortunately, a magnificent oil sketch still exists in the Toledo Museum of Art Ohio USA titled: *Botzaris Surprises the Turkish Camp and Falls Fatally Wounded* (1860 – 1862) The gallery's catalogue entry describes the painting as:

> "a dynamic swirling evocation of a surprise attack. Eugène Delacroix's preparatory study for a larger canvas is a thrilling demonstration of the artist's energetic handling of the brush and his phenomenal prowess both as a colourist and as a composer of form. The rapidly painted canvas captures the genius of a creative mind in the

[147] James Emerson, (1804 – 1869) in Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (eds.) 2009 *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism & the Uses of the Past 1797 – 1896* Ashgate Publishing Ltd. UK page.56
[148] William St Clair, 2008 *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* Open Book Publishers UK page. 56.
[149] David Brewer, 2001 *The Greek War of Independence: The struggle for Freedom from Ottoman Oppression* Overlook Duckworth, New York, pp. 187 – 188.

very process of translating an idea into visual form." [150]

This oil sketch demonstrates the unabated agility, freshness and originality of Delacroix's vision and productivity so close to his death, which took place in 1862.

In April 1824, the year after Markos Bitzaris' death, Lord Byron died of a fever at Missologhi. His death was an international event and drew international attention to the plight of the besieged residents of Messolonghi. When the inevitable defeat came, though another hero emerged, Christos Kapsalis, who remained hidden with the arms cache, with the elderly the sick and the women and children, while the more able bodied broke out in sorties in defiance of the massed Egyptian troops. They were attacked by the Egyptians, who then poured into the compound to kill the remaining insurgents. Kapsalis waited for them to come in numbers and then detonated the arms cache.

Another heroic act was immortalised in a painting by Delacroix's friend and colleague, Ary Scheffer. The *Les femmes Soulites* (1827) committed mass suicide by throwing themselves and their children off a cliff in preference to capture by the Turks. Such reports of heroic exploits, tragic deaths and hair-raising stories of bravery and sacrifice inspired French artists and philhellenes in general who began to reflect on the possibility of the rebirth of classical Greece. The brutal conflict currently raging between Christians and Moslems was redolent with symbolism. Their thoughts turned to the revolutionary slogans of Liberty and equality and they applied them to the Greek cause. The created new masterpieces inspired by the Greek revolution, particularly its violence and horror, arguably these were covert political statements aimed at the oppressive regime of Charles X.

Social tensions increased in France for the duration of the Greek War of Independence. The Greek struggle for freedom did inspire them but domestic politics preoccupied them particularly as divisions between Liberals and Ultras (ultra conservatives) widened further after the death of Louis XVIII in 1824, and the succession to the throne of his brother, the ultraconservative Charles X.

He ran a violently counter revolutionary regime that inspired an unyielding hatred for the Restoration among progressives and Liberals. Monarchists such as Chateaubriand defected to the

[150] Catalogue entry Toledo Museum of Art Ohio USA

Liberal camp and an underground resistance movement headed the Liberals emerged in response to the brutality and injustices of Charles X regime.

Nonetheless, as it turned out, all the efforts of the reactionary Bourbon Restoration to wipe out all signs of the Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire were unsuccessful. In fact such repressive measure simply hardened opposition to the regime and increased resistance. Delacroix was among those who sympathised with the resistance against the authoritarian monarchy and he demonstrated his feelings powerfully when the July 30 revolution broke out.

He celebrated the uprising against the regime of Charles X (1824 – 1830) with arguably his most famous painting, the archetypal image of freedom and resistance; *July 30 Liberty Leading the People*. This however, this was his last work of an overtly political nature. As time passed, he witnessed further episodes of brutality and injustice, such as the 1834 insurrection, when state troops massacred civilians, and was immortalised by Honoré Daumier in a lithograph, *Rue Transnonain, 15 April 1834.*[151] By this time, Delacroix had already lost interest in ideology and politics, and devoted himself to his art and to his friendships.

Orientalism

So far we have discussed ideological movements and social and historical changes and their effects on art and artists during the period from around the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth-century. It is necessary now to mention something about orientalism, which emerged soon after Napoleon's return from Egypt in 1799.

Orientalism is not a style but a genre. It is based entirely on the kind of images, often imagined, that European artists created of people and places associated with the Orient. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu in *Nineteenth-Century European Art* describes orientalism as "..the fascination with cultural domains beyond the confines of Western culture, perhaps best suited to the Romantic longing for emotion that exceeded the traditional norms set by reason and morality."[152] She explained orientalism emerged from European contact with, and interest in the Ottoman Empire,

[151] This lithograph depicts an innocent family murdered in their bedroom by the National Guard in the course of their brutal repression of the working class insurrection initiated by the silk worker's revolt in Lyon.
[152] Petra ten-Doesschate Chu 2012 Nineteenth-Century European Art (third edition) Prentice Hall London UK page 206.

and from objects, books and prints from Napoleon's Egyptian campaign and it was a genre "…marked by a preoccupation with non-Western subject matter, especially scenes from the Arab world and by an emphasis on the exotic, sensuality and violence."[153]

These characteristics of orientalism suited Delacroix's personality well. In the next chapter, his biography shows him to have the kind of temperament and imagination that would attract him to orientalism. His fascination with orientalism made him an early exponent of the genre. He did a series of paintings and drawings based on lord Byron's poem the Giaour, depicting the battle between the Venetian lover of a slave girl punished by drowning, whose death he avenges in a fight with Hassan her killer. He drew numerous studies of Greek men in traditional costumes, dancing, sitting, fighting, and studies of Arabs too, long before he visited North Africa. He is also famous for creating the *Death of Sardanapalus* probably the most important orientalist painting of all.

At this point, it is necessary to discuss Napoleon's contribution to French art because it appears that Napoleon's military exploits had had direct benefits for artists. In 1796 he had a highly successful campaign in Italy. He plundered their fabulous art and artefacts, putting them in "heavy convoys of bullion and works of art to Paris."[154] Prior to the coup of November 1799 when he seized power in France, he had been in Egypt. He had embarked on his expedition to Egypt in 1898 with thousands of troops and a large body of scientists, scholars and officials, and before he returned to France had collected a vast array of Egyptian artefacts.

The artefacts that reached France through these two campaigns contained brilliant art treasures from the great masters of European art. Their relocation in France and their accessibility were of immeasurable value to artists of Delacroix's generation. By enriching the art collections of Paris, they enriched the imagination and skills of artists. Hitherto works of the old masters had only been available through engravings for those who could not travel to see the original works. Delacroix possessed many engravings of the work of the old masters and he studied them intensely.[155] Now he and other students were able to see the real thing in the Louvre and make copies directly from

[153] Ibid pages 206 – 207.
[154] Alfred Cobban, 1957 *A History of Modern France* Volume 1: 1715–1799 p. 255.
[155] In the opening lines of his Journal (part 1, p.1, Delacroix refers to some Michelangelo engravings that he was studying and how deeply they moved him. It was a widespread practice by artists to copy and trace engravings of drawings by the old Masters.

the originals.

Egyptian artefacts also had a significant impact on French art. The collection brought back from Egypt by Napoleon and increasing numbers of Europeans travelling around the Middle East and North Africa, writing about their experiences and impressions and bringing collections of exotic objects back with them, resulted in the emergence of orientalism in painting.

Orientalism was a European artistic phenomenon that based its subject matter entirely on people, scenes and events in countries designated as oriental or eastern, such as Egypt, Morocco and Algiers, Palestine and Turkey. Europeans visited these places in increasing numbers, and they became increasingly popular as subjects in painting throughout the nineteenth century. Delacroix however was one of the earliest exponents of orientalism and probably the most original was his fascination for the exotic orient.

The previous chapter covered the range of styles in French painting and emphasised the origins of classicism, romanticism and the rise of orientalism. Their origins are traceable to the mannerism of Michelangelo and Caravaggio, the classicism of Poussin and Raphael, the baroque flamboyance of Rubens and the rich colourism of Titian. Renaissance, mannerist and baroque art formed in the crucible of rapid and destructive social and political change, just as neoclassicism did in the mid-eighteenth century.[156] It coincided with the Enlightenment, renewed interest in classical Greece, growing political unrest in France and a surge of Greek nationalism in Greece.

Classicism became the symbol of progress and change. Its austerity, rationality and moral purpose became a style representing the people. It contrasted with the courtly styles of baroque and rococo that depicted activities and preoccupations of the aristocracy. In its heyday as the official style of the Revolution and the Empire, it was a radical and progressive style, representing the new and the revolutionary. Its famous interpreter, Jacques-Louis David was the official painter for the Revolution, designer of celebrations and festivals for the Revolution and continued to be the official painter for the Napoleonic Empire.

After Napoleon, the government exiled Jacques-Louis David, who was tarnished as a revolutionary

[156] The term neoclassicism, refer to the classical revival of the mid-eighteenth century and it was adopted in order to differentiate it from the classical revival of the Florentine Renaissance in the early sixteenth century. During the eighteenth-century it was simply referred to as classicism.

and regicide, but it did not ban neoclassicism, the style he had created and of which he remained the greatest exponent. On the contrary, they were impressed with the propaganda value of the style, and chose to adopt it as the official style of the new administration and the standard of excellence in the Academy. Neoclassicism had now moved from a style representing the revolution, symbolising change, freedom and equality, and came to represent conservatism and reaction while the academy continued to promote classicism as the style embodying perfection. Rebadging an idea to mean something quite different from its original purpose and meaning is not a new phenomenon. In this case, it was convenient for the ruling party to adopt something familiar and beloved by society to mean something good about the new regime. The painting style that had symbolised progress now served their interests of conservatives who were using it to help them turn back the clock.

Extremely conservative forces now ruled over Europe Alliances of the great powers sternly repressed all uprisings and revolutions, determined to strengthen the status quo. For artists like Delacroix though this meant a parting of the ways, from the rationalism and status quo of classicism to the irrationality of imagination and feelings central to romanticism. In France this shift was heralded by two paintings, Théodore Géricault's the *Raft of the Medusa* (1818–19) which ushered in romanticism, and *Pygmalion and Galatea* by Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson (1819) which embodied classicism.[157]

The *Raft of the Medusa* represented human suffering changing to hope and humanity's struggle with nature.[158] It was a fitting herald for French romanticism and provided Delacroix with lifelong inspiration. Its influence is detectable in his painting, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* (1824). The "Medusa" had steered him in the direction of romanticism, which at the time represented a new and progressive direction in French art.

Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson painted *Pygmalion and Galatea* around the same time. Girodet-Trioson believed the classical style of *Pygmalion and Galatea* "was metaphysical, for its idealised

[157] James H. Rubin 'Delacroix and Romanticism' in Beth S. Wright (ed.) 2001*The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* Cambridge University Press USA. p. 27.
[158] Ibid, p. 28.

forms embodied human aspirations towards moral perfection."[159]

The two paintings represent noble aspirations, one depicting human struggle for salvation in a contemporary setting, in a real crisis of survival (Medusa) and the other calling on the past to represent moral perfection. In this way artists reflected the political struggle in France in their choice of subjects and the way they painted them. One group looked to the present and the future, using new painting techniques and newly invented colours, while the other looked back to an idealised past using classicism as their guide to technique and style. This reflected the prevailing political division in French society. On one side are the monarchists and conservatives, looking back on the past. On the other side are the liberals and republicans, looking to the present and future.

So by the time the Greek War of Independence broke out in 1821, French political and social life, deeply divided between conservatives and liberals,[160] found new and inspiring subject matter in the dramas and tragedies of the Greek War of Independence and the appropriate conceptual frameworks for great art. It allowed the traumatised French painters of the early nineteenth century to hope for the rebirth of ancient Greek glory. It supplied them with heroes and heroic deeds occurring in their own time, instead of in the past, and the oriental appearance of many of the protagonists of the war offered them the sensuous charm of the exotic and many opportunities for allegory and metaphor through which they could comment on their own situation in France.

Delacroix's empathy and compassion, and the quality of his work was the subject of a presentation at a conference in Chios in 1984, given by the art historian, Francis Haskell. He drew a comparison between Delacroix's *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* and compared it with representations of the same event by two other artists, both contemporaries of Delacroix. These artists were the French artist, Alexandre-Marie Colin, and the British painter, Thomas Baker. According to Haskell, their paintings both show an "obvious debt to the *Massacres*"[161], that is, to Delacroix's controversial painting of 1824.

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[159] Ibid.

[160] At the time, to be a liberal meant being a supporter of the Republic and Bonaparte, and what he stood for while the supporters of monarchical rule were called Ultra-royalists or Ultras, who believed in the return to the rule of the monarchy and to the reinstatement of the privileges of the clergy and the aristocracy.

[161] Francis Haskell *Chios the Massacres and Delacroix in* J. Vaphopoulou-Richardson, and C.E Boardman (eds.) 1986 *Chios A Conference at the Homerion* 1984 Oxford University Press USA p. 357.

Alexandre-Marie Colin painted '*Episode de la Guerre actuelle en Grèce'* and first showed it at the 1826 exhibition to aid the Greek cause, which is where Delacroix exhibited '*Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi'*..

In Haskell's opinion, the paintings by Colin and Baker suffer in comparison with Delacroix's painting because they failed to give a convincing, imaginative response to the horrors depicted. He commented that Colin had turned the episode of horror into a "colourful and exotic spectacle."[162] His response to the large mural, *The Inroads of the Turks Upon Scio in April 1822* Thomas Baker painted on the walls of his own drawing room and for which he charged a fee for people to look at, was similarly lukewarm.

Haskell commented: "Baker has transformed the horrors of the present into the timeless world of classical legend…[a]….dignified if distant (and also somewhat dry) treatment of a repulsive atrocity… ."[163] Haskell acknowledged that both artists were highly skilled and well regarded, but he opined they had failed to depict the real and lived experience of the subjects of their paintings with integrity and respect.

Eugène Delacroix – his birth, his health and his family life

Ferdinand-Victor Eugène Delacroix was born on 26th April 1798 at Charenton-Saint-Maurice on the outskirts of Paris. He was born into a prosperous, well-connected, upper middle-class family, surrounded by wealth and privilege throughout his childhood and most of his adolescence. He was the youngest of four children of Charles-François Delacroix and Victoire Oeben-Delacroix. His elder brother, Charles-Henri Delacroix was a general during the first French Empire under Napoleon, and his sister, Henriette married the diplomat, Raymond de Verninac. His brother, Henri, twelve years older than Eugène and the sibling he was closest to, entered military service under Napoleon, but died at the battle of Friedland in 1807 at the age of twenty-one. Charles Delacroix, his father, had been a deputy to the Convention, and had voted for the execution of the king, Louis XVI. He became a member of the Directory and in November 1795 became Minister of

[162] Ibid.
[163] The mural measured 30 feet long by 12 feet high. In Haskell 1984 p. 358.

Foreign Affairs, a post he held until sacked in July 1797.[164] He became ambassador to the new Batavian Republic (now the Netherlands) until 1800, when he became Préfet at Marseilles until 1803 when he went to Bordeaux.

Eugène Delacroix's maternal grandfather, Jean-François Oeben and his cousin, Léon Reisener belonged to families renowned for fine cabinet making. The Oeben family were cabinet-makers to Louis XV and Delacroix's mother was one of the daughters of Jean-François Oeben who was described by René Huyghe as "the famous cabinet-maker to Louis XV and a protégé of Madame de Pompadour."[165] He was close to his mother's stepbrother, Henri-François Reisener, who was a successful painter in his own right and who had studied with Jacques-Louis David. Reisener helped Delacroix further his career by advising him on painting techniques, encouraging him to develop a strong work ethic and arranging for him to join the artist, Pierre-Narcisse Guerin's studio, after he enrolled at the Academie de Beaux-Arts. Reisener had good social and political connections because of his family's connections with the royal court. He introduced the young Delacroix to the influential Baron Gérard, fashionable portrait painter and court painter to Louis XVIII, who received Delacroix in his circle. According to René Huyghe, Talleyrand, himself a regular attendee, recommended Delacroix's introduction to the salon of Baron Gérard. Delacroix became a regular visitor and there he met Talleyrand and the famous actor, François Joseph Talma.

Some of these connections were useful to Delacroix all his life. For example, in 1852, 23 years after Talma's death, the administration of the Beaux-Arts commissioned him to paint a portrait of Talma for the foyer of the Comédie François. Delacroix painted *Talma as Nero in Racine's Britannicus*.[166] He also met Mlle Mars, the actor and the lover of the Comte de Mornay, who arranged for Delacroix to join the diplomatic mission to Algiers and Morocco as a companion for the Comte in 1832.[167] As already mentioned, this trip changed his art dramatically.

Other frequenters of the salon of Baron Gérard included Honoré de Balzac who dedicated the *Girl*

[164] Philip G. Dwyer, 2002 *Talleyrand: Profiles in Power* Longman Pearson Education Ltd UK. Dwyer describes Talleyrand's accession to the post of foreign minister by displacing Charles Delacroix, sacked to make room for him. Dwyer commented that Charles Delacroix had stayed in office a little over a year and a half, a period longer than his ten of his predecessors since 1789.
[165] René Huyghe, 1963 *Delacroix* Thames & Hudson, London, UK, p. 53.
[166] Barthélémy Jobert, 1997 *Delacroix* Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p. 60.
[167] Ibid, p.140.

with the Golden Eyes to Delacroix in 1835 although Delacroix himself was not impressed by his writing.[168] Prosper Mérimée, author of *Carmen and* Stendhal, writer and art critic with whom Delacroix later became close friends.

Adolf Thiers, influential historian, states-man and admirer of Delacroix's paintings, became the first president of the Third Republic. Thiers awarded Delacroix the lucrative commission to decorate public buildings. Delacroix, already well connected from birth, developed his intellectual life and career among some of the best minds of the time.[169]

The death of Victoire Delacroix's mother, coincided, as mentioned earlier, with the fall of Napoleon in 1814. When that happened everything changed for the remaining Delacroix's family comprising Eugène, his elder brother, his sister and her husband.

The Bourbon Restoration took office in 1815 and again in 1815 after Napoleon's brief return for one hundred days. These were difficult times for Delacroix and his siblings. The restoration halved the pensions of soldiers who had fought with Bonaparte and discharged them from service. Delacroix's elder brother, General Charles-Henri Delacroix was among the many soldiers forced to leave the military on half pay. The family's fortune, which had been substantial during the Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, crumbled. Their status and wealth dissolved.

We have already mentioned the embezzling family lawyer and the sad fate of Delacroix's brother-in-law, Raymond de Verninac, whose futile efforts to recover the money, led to his own early death and bankruptcy in 1822, seven years after the death of his mother-in-law Victoire. Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Iowa, Alan Spitzer, described the fall of the first Empire as a traumatic event for the Delacroix family: "The young Delacroix entered the era of the Bourbon Restoration under the care of an elder sister in a grim family environment of straitened circumstances."[170]

Fortunately, the sixteen-year-old Eugène Delacroix seemed to have a practical outlook and he therefore set about addressing his financial difficulties. He began producing and selling political

[168] Ibid, p.37.
[169] René Huyghe 1963 *Delacroix* Thames & Hudson, London, UK page 54.
[170] Alan B. Spitzer 'Delacroix and his Generation' in Beth Wright (ed.) 2001 *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* Oxford University Press USA p. 9.

and satirical prints as etchings or lithographs until 1822.[171] In 1819, he earned fifteen francs on completing his first commission, a painting of the Virgin and Child (*Virgin of the Harvest*) for the parish church of Orcemont. In 1821, his colleague Géricault, "an ardent secularist" who was commissioned to paint a Virgin of the Sacred Heart for a convent at Nantes, arranged for Delacroix to paint it for him. When Delacroix finished the painting, Géricault signed it and split the commission between them.[172]

Delacroix lived in "gentle penury" for some time. Jean Stewart, the English translator and editor of his *Selected Letters 1813–1863* commented that he stayed with friends when he could not afford a fire, was a frequent visitor to the local pawnshop, and was often in the embarrassing position of not being able to pay his bills. He sometimes lived only on bread and cheese, he lost weight and "kept running an unaccountable fever."[173] One poignant entry in his journal relates to his search for a studio. He visited a "superb" one occupied by a certain Mauzaisse, but because he could not afford it, he consoled himself with rational truth: "there was no need to have such a fine studio to do good painting."[174]

Education

Delacroix attended the Lycée Impérial (formerly the Collège Louis-le-grand)[175] for nine years. Alan Spitzer described it as one of the "four Paris Lycées that at the end of the Empire and beginning of the Restoration, constituted the cradle of the meritocracy."[176] These included the brilliant but short-lived romantic artist, Théodore Géricault (1791 – 1824), the writer Victor Hugo and his brothers, and the artist, Raymond Soulier, who became one of Delacroix's longest standing and closest friends. Delacroix matriculated from the Lycée, enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts in 1816 when he was eighteen years old, and joined the studio of Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, the recently appointed professor of painting a year later in 1817.[177] At Guérin's studio, Delacroix met the brothers, Ary and Henri Scheffer, artists and political activists, and Théodore Géricault.

[171] Ibid: Chronology p. x
[172] Frank Anderson Trapp 1970 The Attainment of Delacroix page 15.
[173] Stewart, 1970 *Selected Letters* page 3.
[174] Journal dated April 1823, p. 9 (Wellington 1995).
[175] Beth S. Wright (ed.) (2001) *The Cambridge Companion,* p.x.
[176] Ibid, Alan Spitzer, p.9.
[177] Frank Anderson Trapp (1970), p. 15.

According to Frank Anderson Trapp, the meeting between the two artists was a momentous event for Delacroix. Géricault's creative gifts, and his sophistication, charm and elegance impressed Delacroix deeply. When Géricault offered to let him see his masterpiece, the *Raft of the Medusa* in progress, Delacroix was thrilled. He even posed for one of the figures in the painting.[178]

Guérin had a very good reputation as a painter and teacher. He provided solid, orthodox training in a friendly atmosphere. According to Albert Boime he was also an innovator, and his studio was a "cynosure for radical ideas" with his "taste for melodramatic scenes and novel lighting effects…" Guérin modernised the academic curriculum, introducing the preparation of painted sketches to the preliminary trials for the Prix Rome and offered landscape prizes.[179] To Guérin's tutelage therefore, Delacroix's facility in preliminary painted sketches and romantic landscapes, may be attributed. Boime wrote that Guérin "encouraged original aptitudes and advanced the talents of his students in tune with the changing times."[180]

Delacroix was indeed a student in tune with the changing times. His reading covered a large spectrum of issues ranging from the classics of antiquity to contemporary literature and poetry. He was fascinated with British fashion and culture. He read Walter Scott's novels, Byron's poetry and the works of Shakespeare. All his life, he never ceased to find inspiration in literature for his paintings. He was an avid writer and essayist. In his journals, he wrote about art and everything else that mattered to him, emulating the great Leonardo, whose 7000 pages of notes and drawings continue to be studied today[181] Delacroix was a literary artist and frequently sought inspiration for his paintings in literature and poetry.

David Scott, Professor of French [textual and visual studies] at Trinity College, Dublin explored "the inextricable links between painting and literature in Delacroix's thinking and creative practice…"[182] He referred to poets Theophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire, who were Delacroix's greatest

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[178] Frank Anderson Trapp *The Attainment of Delacroix* (1970) Johns Hopkins University Press, USA, pp.14-15. Delacroix was overwhelmed when he saw the painting for the first time. Trapp reports Delacroix's reaction to the painting, which was originally described by his lifelong friend and first biographer, Piron. "He [Géricault] allowed me to come to see the *Medusa* while he was working on it in a bizarre studio he had near Ternes. I was so overwhelmed by it that after leaving there I ran like a crazy man all the way home to the Rue de la Planche.

[179] Albert Boime, 2004 *Art in the Age of Counter Revolution 1815–1848* pp. 118-119.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Robert Wallace and the editors of Time-Life Books *The World of Leonardo 1452 – 1519* (1966) Time-Life International (Netherland) NV page 10

[182] David Scott, *Painting/Literature: The Impact of Delacroix on Aesthetic Theory, Art Criticism and Poetics in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France* in Beth Wright (ed.) 2001 *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* pp. 170-86.

admirers. They were full of admiration for the innovativeness he demonstrated in creating works of visual art from literature and poetry, finding his easel painting, *Ovid among the Scythians* (1859) particularly compelling.

Michèle Hannoosh, Professor of French at Saint Catherine's College Cambridge (University) in *Painting and the Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, explores the relationship between Delacroix's aesthetic theory, derived from written words and his visual art practice, devoting considerable time to Delacroix's *Dictionaire* in her research. She found that he used the same conversational approach in the way he wrote in the *Dictionaire* as he used in his journals. The Dictionaire was to him a highly personal document with an instructive function.[183] He wrote about a range of artistic reflections including the philosophy of art, and on various technical matters. In embarking on this project, he demonstrated he was a man of his time, joining the ranks of serious thinkers and scholars who created dictionaries and other documents out of their experience and practice, for the education of society and for posterity.

A question of paternity

The Question of Delacroix's paternity, that is, whether Delacroix was indeed the illegitimate son of the powerful Statesman, aristocrat and known philanderer, Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord,[184] remains unresolved to this day. Réne Huyghe, a prominent Delacroix scholar, is the staunchest advocate for the notion that Talleyrand was indeed Delacroix's father. He did not change his mind even when a discovery, brought to his attention in 1962, a year before the English translation of this volume appeared in circulation, of a declaration signed by Charles and Victoire Oeben Delacroix in November 1797, asserting that the coming offspring was their own child.[185] In response he wrote: "Perhaps Madam Delacroix thought by this means to forearm herself against possible gossip, and had advised her husband for both their sakes to establish a term, which

[183] Michele Hannoosh, 1995 *Painting and the Journal of Eugène Delacroix* Princeton University Press, USA, p.111.
[184] Philip G. Dwyer, in his 2002 publication, *Talleyrand profiles on Power* Pearson Education Ltd. GB page 1, wrote that: 'Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord was one of the most able and gifted diplomats of the 19th century but incapable of loyalty to any one, regime. Always influential but without political scruples, he had been a bishop a revolutionary, and a foreign minister. After the fall of Napoleon in 1814 – 15, he helped establish a solid European system in the aftermath of the Revolution and war."
[185] Réne Huyghe, 1963, *Delacroix* Thames & Hudson, UK, p.51. Writers supporting the position accepting the word of the surgeon, who asserted that Charles Delacroix was perfectly capable of fathering a child after surgery, include professor Frank Anderson Trapp and Professor Lee Johnson who wrote the six volumes Critical Catalogue of the paintings of Eugène Delacroix, now regarded as the benchmark study of Delacroix's art.

though short, would not rule out the hypothesis that the coming birth was simply premature. And the problem remains obscure"[186].

The document signed in November 1797 therefore established the possibility the infant might be born prematurely. The child was indeed born "prematurely" at seven months in April 1798.[187]

Elisabeth Fraser in *Delacroix, Art and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France* (2004), has canvassed rumours and mythologies relating to the paternity of Delacroix. She cites Théophile Silvestre, who favoured Talleyrand as Delacroix's father. Silvestre wrote that Delacroix was "cradled on the knee of Talleyrand",[188] implying that Talleyrand visited the home of the infant Delacroix and presumably, his mother, Victoire.

Elisabeth Fraser though is not as concerned with the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Delacroix's birth, as she is in the mythology associated with the story of his birth, and the fact that it is "his father's paternity that is the most recurrent of the anecdotes".[189] By making the point however that the identity of the father "is the most recurrent of the anecdotes"[190] the absence of discussion about the other essential player in this saga, namely Delacroix's mother, Victoire Oeben-Delacroix is quite interesting. The issue of Victoire's rumoured adultery, and how it might have affected Delacroix, who did learn about the rumours regarding his legitimacy, and whether it had any influence on his art, is addressed in chapter 6 *Médée Furieuse*.

Having said that, new information has recently emerged that makes a strong affirmative case for Eugène Delacroix's biological father being Talleyrand[191]. There is further discussion about the

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[186] René Huyghe 1963 *Delacroix* Thames and Hudson UK Page 519

[187] There appear to be two camps regarding the question of Delacroix's father. One camp believing that Delacroix's official father was his actual father and the other believing that it was Talleyrand.
The supporters of Talleyrand consider it very unlikely that Charles Delacroix was capable of fathering a child before September 1797. Therefore Delacroix's birth in April 1798 would have been regarded as premature by the supporters of Charles Delacroix as the father while the supporters of Talleyrand would have considered conception immediately after surgery unlikely. Talleyrand, who had taken over Charles Delacroix's position as foreign minister, known to be a personal friend of the family and a well-known philanderer, was therefore believed to be a much likelier candidate as the father of Eugène.
A copy of this document was found among Eugène Delacroix's possessions after his death by his executor.
It seems that Delacroix himself might have entertained some doubts about his paternity. Huyghe writes that he sometimes put his date of birth back by one year, perhaps "….moved by a desire to make it look more legitimate." (Huyghe 1963:52). But nevertheless he only wrote about his father in the most respectful terms.

[188] Elizabeth Fraser 2004 *Delacroix*, *Art and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France* Cambridge University Press, UK, pps.12, 14, 179 in his *Histoire des artistes vivants français et étrangers; Etudes d'après nature* 1856.

[189] Ibid, p.14.

[190] Ibid

[191] In the science section of the online Guardian in 2011 there was an article about the discovery of a drawing of a French Surgeon with the trophy of his work. This trophy was a massive testicular tumor contained in a large jar sitting on his desk. The surgeon who is the subject of the drawing, was the surgeon who operated on Charles Delacroix (Eugène Delacroix's legal father, the husband of his mother) He removed the tumour. The drawing is now in the collection of the Wellcome Library for the History of Medicine. (http://www.theguardian.com/science/2011/huge-testicular-tumour-

drawing of the surgeon later. For now, we consider other details of Delacroix's biography, beginning with the heavy toll of family bereavement in his youth.

Eugene Delacroix was the youngest child of a prosperous, upper middle-class family that supported the Revolution. All accounts agree that it was a loving family, and Delacroix was a happy child who loved his parents and who loved him dearly. From a young age, however, he experienced a series of deaths and losses in his family. They began with the death of his father in 1805 when he was seven years old. Then his closest brother Henri died in war aged twenty-one in 1807 when Delacroix was nine years old. His mother died in 1814 when he was sixteen years old and Delacroix and his siblings then discovered the family was bankrupt. As a result, sixteen-year-old Eugène Delacroix was penniless and dependent on his elder sister and her husband, his brother-in-law Raymond de Verninac. Raymond did what he could to reclaim the family's wealth, which had been embezzled by the family lawyer, but years of legal battles to recover the stolen family fortune failed and he himself died a bankrupt in 1822.

The pain and grief of multiple bereavements was not Delacroix's only torment. There was also the question of his paternity. As previously mentioned, it was widely rumoured at the time of his birth that Delacroix was the illegitimate son of Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord. These rumours circulated because there were doubts about the capacity of Charles Delacroix, his legal father, to conceive a child, given the extraordinarily large size of his testicular tumour.

Charles Delacroix suffered from a massive testicular tumour, which made it almost impossible for him to walk around on his own and he had to be moved around on a stretcher. He underwent dangerous and highly publicised surgery in 1791 to have the tumour removed, seven months before the birth of Eugène Delacroix,. The surgery was successful and his surgeon wrote a report in which he asserted that Charles Delacroix was henceforth capable of conceiving a child.

However, new evidence emerged in 2011 in an article in the online Guardian, contradicts this view. The author of the article, Maev Kennedy, reported that a rare portrait by the French artist Pierre Chassalet found in a private English collection identified the subject as the "distinguished Surgeon

Ange-Bernard Imbert Delonnes"[192] who was the surgeon who removed Charles Delacroix's tumour. The drawing depicts him sitting at his desk on which stands an enormous jar filled with a massive tumour. The Wellcome Library acquired the drawing as an important contribution to the History of Medicine and William Shupbach, Librarian at the Wellcome Trust, commented that it was unlikely that Charles Delacroix could have conceived a child, given the nature of the tumour.[193] This discovery adds quite a compelling piece of evidence to the widely canvassed question of Delacroix's paternity, which, during his own lifetime was a background murmur, and a strictly kept family secret.

On his recovery from surgery, Charles Delacroix resumed his post as French diplomat in the Low Countries.[194] His wife Victoire became pregnant. She expressed fears that her child may be born prematurely, and it appears that was indeed the case. Calculations regarding the earliest possible time that Charles Delacroix could conceive a child concluded that the infant Delacroix was born ten weeks premature which seems doubtful, as the infant's chances of survival would have been quite poor.

The fact that Victoire urged her husband to sign a formal declaration with her, asserting they were both his legal parents probably indicated that she knew the child was likely to be born full term, but in terms of the dates of Charles Delacroix's surgery it would be regarded as premature. The declaration guaranteed the child's legitimacy and helped him avoid the dire fate of becoming a social outcast, the usual fate of illegitimate children born out of adultery. [195] René Huyghe discussed the emotional toll of these experiences writing: "It is possible that this implacable series of amputations which Delacroix suffered so early in life permanently injured his sensibility, so that it withdrew into itself and ceased to be trusting and expansive."[196]

This point indicates the existence of conflicting issues in his personality, such as his ambivalence towards women, perhaps a result of the early death of his mother, his sole surviving parent leaving

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192

193 Article and image in online science journal of *The Guardian* titled *Huge testicular tumour helps identify subject of 19th century portrait* / science / *the Guardian* https://www.theguardian.com/science/2011/may/24/huge-testicular-tumour-portrait[5/01/2017 11:31:20 am

194 Since named Netherlands and Belgium.

195 Elisabeth A Fraser (2004) Delacroix, Art and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France Cambridge University Press UK page 181

196 Rene Huyghe 1963 *Delacroix* (trans. from the French by Jonathan Griffin) Thames & Hudson, London, p. 18.

him an orphan at the age of sixteen. His life experience, made up of a combination of early and frequent bereavements, and rumours of his illegitimacy, which incriminated his mother as an adulterer, could have caused him embarrassment and humiliation as he was growing up. There is little evidence regarding Delacroix's feelings in this regard except one telling action of his. He tended to write his date of birth a year later. René Huyghe wrote: "that in putting back the date of his birth by a year, as he often did, Delacroix may have been moved by a desire to make it look more legitimate."[197] Such considerations tend to point to the likely existence of painful internal conflicts and may have contributed to his ambivalence towards women. On the other hand, this situation probably contributed to his creativity as an artist. This point will be considered in the analysis of the individual paintings.

Conclusion of the chapter

Despite the protracted social and political turmoil and radical political changes that took place throughout Delacroix's lifetime, opportunities for artists, particularly those of Delacroix's calibre, were plentiful. Throughout the early nineteenth century, official commissions for many large-scale decorative works were regularly available. Governments, regardless of whether they were progressive or conservative, provided a lot of support for artists, buying their works for display in the Luxembourg Museum built for the express purpose of show casing the work of emerging and living artists.

The Palais du Luxembourg, originally built by Maria de Medici between 1615 and 1630, housed a museum, which in 1750 became the first French museum to be open to the public. The collections housed there included Rubens, Leonardo, Raphael, Veronese, Titian, Poussin, Van Dyke and Rembrandt. This collection moved to the Louvre and in 1818, and the Bourbon government designated the Palais du Luxembourg a museum for living, or contemporary artists. Delacroix was an early beneficiary of this policy. His first work exhibited in a salon, was the *Barque of Dante,* which the government purchased and hung in the Luxembourg Museum in 1822.

> During Delacroix's lifetime, salon exhibitions were usually biennial. Many of the works exhibited were purchased by the state and hung in the Luxembourg Museum.

[197] Ibid, p.52.

Delacroix was a witness of the revolution of July 1830 and he perceived it as a modern subject for a painting. He created what is arguably his most widely recognized painting, *Liberty Leading the People.* It reflected the same romantic fervour he had applied to *Massacres at Chios*, a painting inspired by the Greek War of Independence. This famous allegorical figure had two earlier models. One is the legendary figure of Marianne, symbol of the French Revolution and revolutionary freedom. The other is his 1826 painting *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, his first allegory on a contemporary theme. *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi* was also based on Marianne, and slightly different versions of her Phrygian cap[198] are depicted on the heads of both *Liberty Leading...* and *Greece on the Ruins*… .

When *Liberty Leading the People* showed at the Salon of 1831, it received a noisy and mixed reception. Boime described the painting "…as a lightning rod for every shade of political opinion."[199] The state purchased the painting, but it soon lost favour with the July monarchy, and they removed it from display in the Luxembourg Museum.

In concluding this section with Haskell's comparison between Delacroix's interpretation of the massacres at Chios and the interpretation of that event by two of his contemporaries, it is probably Delacroix's individuality and integrity that is highlighted. This is what gives his paintings the power to stand out among those of his contemporaries. If there were a single sentence to describe Delacroix's paintings, it is that they radiate with intensity. His intensity as an individual and his dedication to his art are the main points this chapter attempts to illustrate by considering those aspects of his life that shaped his personality and unique vision.

Delacroix was a complex, private and intense person. In later life, in his late forties and early fifties he became a "man about town" as Timothy Wilson Smith puts it. He attended official balls, and spent weekends at the houses of the wealthy and nobility. While his vanity was gratified, he found these things boring. He was too ill and too focused on his paintings, his murals and his writing to derive a lot of pleasure in these invitations.

His early fears about his health were justified. The first signs appeared as an intermittent fever in

[198] The Phrygian cap was worn by freed Roman slaves as a symbol of their freedom.
[199] Albert Boime *Art in the Age of Counterrevolution 1815 – 1848 Volume 3* (2004) The University of Chicago Press USA page 241.

his early twenties and increased over time. Eventually it became a tubercular throat infection with chronic laryngitis and pulmonary congestion, that made it difficult for him to talk and socialise in later life.

CHAPTER 4
"A WAY OF DRAWING SOME ATTENTION TO MYSELF……"
SCENES FROM THE MASSACRES AT CHIOS

Figure 1: Scenes from the Massacres at Chios: Greek Families Awaiting Death or Slavery, etc. (1824) oil on canvas (4.19m x .3.54m), Musée du Louvre, Paris

Introduction

This chapter deals with the following issues: The Greek Revolution, *The Massacres at Chios* and

The tensions between classicism and romanticism and a visual analysis of the painting

Scenes from the Massacres at Chios….Greek Families Awaiting Death or Slavery etc. (1824) is one of Eugène Delacroix's most famous paintings, and probably his most controversial. Inspired by the mass slaughter of citizens on the island of Chios by Turkish troops in 1822, it depicts a group of defeated, injured civilians awaiting execution, or transport to the slave markets.

The focus of the painting is this group of sixteen figures positioned at the front of the picture plane. The detail and beauty of their costumes indicates that Delacroix went to considerable trouble to find and use authentic costumes from the period. The gorgeous colours and the luxurious quality of the fabrics worn by the despairing Greeks indicate that these people were probably prosperous and cultured.

The brutal massacre of the islanders of Chios by Turkish troops in 1822 is one of the most violent episodes in the Greek Revolution. This event and the fall of Messolonghi to Egyptian forces in 1826 were among the most dramatic events of the war. They inspired an outpouring of artworks from many Europeans, and in particular from the French artist, Eugène Delacroix with this painting in 1824 and with Greece on the ruins of Messolonghi in 1826. *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, remains one of his most dramatic and enigmatic paintings, a signature work that immediately connects the viewer with the Greek revolution, and still continues to be of abiding interest to scholars.

The Greek Revolution broke out in 1821. It was one of many uprisings throughout Europe, but it was the first to break out in the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the uprising began when a reinvigorated Europe, having defeated Napoleon decisively at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, was determined to stamp out all uprisings through the formation of coalitions, or congresses designed to enforce the peace. In her original dissertation, art historian Nina Athanassoglou-Souyoujoglou, in her 1980 dissertation, described these coalitions of the great powers as:

> "two reactionary and stability preserving coalitions, the Quadruple Alliance (England, Austria, Russia, Prussia, joined in 1818 by France) and the all-powerful Holy Alliance (Russia, Prussia, Austria), keen on preserving the

ruling status and the territorial balance of post Napoleonic Europe"[200]

These coalitions did have a stabilising effect on the international environment, but they were politically very conservative and were unable to quell underlying tensions and instabilities. The Quadruple Alliance later allowed France to join under pressure from Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord[201] who was representing France in the negotiations[202]. The Congress of Vienna, led by the conservative Prince Clemens Von Metternich, was unsympathetic towards to the struggle of the Greeks, and refused to intervene, despite unspeakable atrocities committed by the Turks on the island of Chios. He simply considered these atrocities to be legitimate measures taken by the sultan to discipline his subjects.

On the other hand, the progress of the Greek Revolution, increasingly symbolising the importance of freedom and the Western way of life, fanned the flames of liberalism and philhellenism, particularly in France and aggravated growing political divisions between the liberals and the conservatives.

The Enlightenment genie came out of the bottle in the late eighteenth century and influenced diaspora Greeks who spearheaded the Greek enlightenment. It had the effect of enhancing prosperity among diaspora Greeks and the rise of national consciousness. In the meantime, it appeared that the Ottoman Empire was in decline. This perception encouraged resistance movements among the Greeks, and increased their determination to gain their freedom from Ottoman occupation.

In the introduction to *William St Clair's That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence*, Roderick Beaton, Koraes Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Modern Greek Studies, King's College London, wrote:

"The whole 'Greek War of Independence', forms a watershed between the failed liberal-nationalist revolutions in Spain and Italy at the beginning of the 1820s, and the successful ones in France and Belgium in 1830. Thereafter the process that would eventually establish the nation-state as the model throughout Europe and much of the

[200] Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, Dissertation: *French Images From the Greek War of Independence 1821–1827: Art and Politics Under the Restoration* (1980) Princeton University, p.3.
[201] See page 80 of this thesis for a short summary of Talleyrand's character and career.
[202] Philip k. Dwyer Talleyrand Profiles in Power (2002) Pearson Education Limited UK pages 144 - 145

world was unstoppable."[203]

The outbreak of the Greek War of Independence ignited savage retaliatory action by the Sultan. He began with the torture and desecration of the body of Gregorios, the reigning Patriarch of Constantinople, whom he accused of complicity in the outbreak. William St Clair described the fate of the patriarch: "He was summarily hanged. His body remained for three days suspended from the gate of the Patriarchate, and was then dragged through the streets and thrown into the sea".[204]

Greek Revolution ended in 1827, after much bloody slaughter and struggle, when British, French and Russian fleets attacked and destroyed the Turkish and Egyptian fleets in the bay of Navarino on 20th October 1827. The victors subsequently negotiated with the Turks to establish an independent Greece. By 1833, independent Greece, occupying an area less than half the size of Greece today, had become a monarchy, with a Bavarian king. This small, interim Greece stretched from the Peloponnese in the South to Roumeli in the North, and from Arta in the West to Volos in the East.

The Ottoman Empire had been in decline since the failed siege of Vienna in 1683 and the loss of territory resulting from the treaty of Kütchük Kainardji made with the Russian Empire in 1774. This treaty also provided the Greek merchant navy with trading privileges under the protection of the Russian flag around 1783.[205] As a result, Greek ships increased in number and so did the wealth of the Greek Merchant Navy, and other diaspora Greeks, who used some of their wealth to build schools and publish great numbers of books. Improvements in education, the emergence of the Greek Enlightenment, and the spread of ideas of freedom and equality had a liberating effect on many Greek subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

Diaspora Greeks, many of whom were well educated and cosmopolitan, living in European cultural capitals such as Paris, Vienna and Rome, helped to spread the Greek Enlightenment. They contributed to the renewal of interest in classical Greece, and the neoclassical revival that spread from about 1750 was apparent in the way it influenced art and architecture throughout Europe. The

[203] Roderick Beaton's Introduction in William St Clair *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (2008) Open Book Publishers, Cambridge, UK, p.xvii.
[204] Ibid, p.3.
[205] C. M. Woodhouse, *Modern Greece a Short History* (1968). The trading privileges under the Russian Flag were the result of Catherine the Great forcing the Turks to accept a commercial convention supplementing the 1774 Treaty of Kütchük Kainardji, giving the Greeks the privilege of trading rights under the Russian flag (p.120).

atmosphere of Grecian revivalism helped raise European awareness of the plight of modern Greeks who had been living under Ottoman rule for over four hundred years. The cause for the liberation of Greece promoted notions of the rebirth of classical Greece, which, they believed, would happen when Greece was free again.

Prosperous, educated Greeks under Ottoman rule had long had a desire to raise the cultural level of the Greeks, particularly among the Phanariotes.[206] These were powerful affluent, educated Greeks who lived grouped around the lighthouse or the "Phanar" in Constantinople, hence their name Phanariotes. They comprised the bulk of administrators and bureaucrats of the Empire and their power and influence increased as Ottoman authority declined. The author of *The Greek National Revival and the French Enlightenment* (1971), Loukis Charilaou Theocharides, explained that the influence of Louis XIV over the Porte and the needs of diplomacy had earlier resulted in the Phanariotes learning the French language and importing French secretaries in the seventeenth century. He described the Phanariotes "as the catalyst by which education in general and the French enlightenment in particular penetrated the Greek world."[207]

The Phanariotes had had a longstanding plan for Greek independence that did not involve insurrection. According to Theocharides, Greeks and other Hellenised people already holding high office in the Ottoman and church administration, saw the possibility of gradually taking more and more control of the Ottoman Empire in a peaceful takeover. The Greek Enlightenment from 1750 to 1821 was:

> "The period when a determined effort was made to acquire the new knowledge of the west and to raise the cultural level of the Greeks, this intellectual awakening ....took place at this period due to a variety of influences from increased contact Western European nations such as France, England, Germany and Italy."[208]

Unfortunately, when the Greek Revolution did break out in March 1821, it had the immediate effect of scuttling the plans of the Phanariots for a peaceful takeover.

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[206] The Phanariots were the Greeks of Constantinople that lived in the Phanar district (the Lighthouse district). Many of them were well educated, westernised, and prosperous administrators working in well paid and responsible positions in the Ottoman Bureaucracy.
[207] Ibid, p.13.
[208] Loukis Charilaou Theocharides *The Greek National Revival and the Greek Enlightenment* (1971) University of Pittsburgh University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, p.15.

The brutal slaughter of tens of thousands of innocent people was a persistent theme of the Greek War of Independence. In 1821, the Greeks had the advantage, but in 1822, Turkish retribution for the outbreak of the revolution, was utterly horrendous. The massacres at Chios, Psara, other islands, and in Constantinople, were violent, sadistic and widespread, and Greek advantage steadily eroded as the war progressed and the Sultan added to his firepower by engaging Egyptian troops. In 1826, it looked as though the Greeks would lose the war, but allied intervention (Britain, France and Russia) prevented the annihilation of the Greeks.

The massacres at Chios

William St Clair described the island of Chios as a "rich and fertile island…. inhabited almost exclusively by orthodox Greeks."[209] The population at that time numbered around 100,000. They were comfortable, well-educated, prosperous people, owing to the unique resource, the mastic tree, whose sap, exported in the form of small lumps of gum, was a highly prized commodity throughout the Middle East. Its export brought in a substantial revenue stream for the Sultan and enriched the islanders of Chios.

The islanders therefore had no reason to join the revolution. They were wealthy comfortable and content with their lot, and did not see the need to change it. As a sign of loyalty to the Sultan, they had given as hostages to the Turks, several prominent men from their community. The leaders of the Greek insurgency however had other plans. They aimed to embroil as many Greek communities as possible by engineering atrocities to aggravate the Sultan and force him to retaliate. They achieved this goal in March 1822 when they sent several hundred armed men from the neighbouring island of Samos to Chios, where they destroyed a few mosques and proclaimed the Revolution. The Sultan made an example of the Sciotes (the residents of Chios) executing the hostages and sending Turkish troops, accompanied by thousands of armed men in small boats, to take part in a holy war to regain Chios.

Thousands were killed in the streets and thousands more rounded up to be transported to the slave markets. Roving mobs also hunted down Sciotes living in Constantinople, and, in accordance with the Ottoman custom that every individual shares responsibility for the actions of their

[209] William St Clair *That Greece Might still be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (2008), p. 78.

community, tortured them horribly and left their bodies to rot in the streets. "…The whole of Chios was given over to massacre and destruction. One of the most peaceful and thriving communities in the Levant, utterly and irretrievably ruined. It seems that it has never properly recovered."[210]

These atrocities, publicised widely in the press, gave Eugène Delacroix and indeed most Europeans up to date information about the Greek insurrection.

The Greek struggle had wide appeal to all ideological persuasions in France. Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer argued in her dissertation that all political persuasions in France sympathised with the two main ideas associated with the Greek insurrection, namely the Christian struggle for freedom from Islam, and the survival of Western civilisation. However, from 1824 onwards French attitudes toward the Greek war became politicised along party political lines, because of the nature of political tensions in France[211], and the sharp division between liberals and ultraconservatives or Ultras.

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Delacroix painted *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* and showed it at the Salon of 1824. At that exhibition, a passionate conflict between adherents of two different styles in art, classicism and romanticism broke out.

As discussed in chapter 2, King Louis XVIII died in September 1824, and his extremely authoritarian brother, Charles X took the throne. His violent and repressive rule polarised French politics between liberals and conservatives resulting in the July revolution of 1830.

The politicisation of French art that emerged that year was associated with two great romantic paintings: Théodore Géricault's the *Raft of the Medusa* painted in 1819 and Eugène Delacroix's *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* painted in 1824.

The following section discusses the emergence of French romanticism in relation to these two significant paintings.

[210] Ibid, p.80.
[211] Nina M. Athanssoglou-Kallmyer, *French Images from the Greek War of Independence 1821–1827: Art and Politics Under the Restoration* (1980) Dissertation, Princeton University, University Microfilms International, p.19.

The shadow of Géricault in *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*

On 27th January 1824, Delacroix received the news of Théodore Géricault's death.

Géricault was arguably the most influential living artist in Delacroix's life and his masterpiece of 1819, the *Raft of the Medusa*, influenced the structure and composition of Delacroix's painting *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios,* which he had been working on at the time of Géricault's death. The news of his death upset him enough to make him paint out what he had been working on at the time and which he wrote about in his journal:

> "This morning I received a letter announcing the death of Géricault. I cannot get used to the idea. Although everyone must have known that we would inevitably lose him before long, I almost felt that we could conjure death away by refusing to accept the idea. But death would not relinquish its prey, and tomorrow the earth will hide what little remains of him. What a different fate his great bodily strength and his warmth and imagination seemed to promise! Strictly speaking, he was not a friend of mine, but the tragedy cuts me to the heart. It has made me leave my work and paint out all that I have done."[212]

Although he wrote that Géricault was not "strictly speaking" a friend, his influence on him remained throughout his life.

His influence is visible in many of Delacroix's paintings and particularly so in *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, where he adopted aspects of the dual pyramid structure of Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819), and repeated it in the *Massacres at Chios*. The structure of the *Medusa* involved one heavy diagonal mast carrying a large sail with dead and dying people at its base, while the adjacent pyramid comprises a single figure at its peak, supported on the shoulders of other castaways while he desperately signals a distant ship. Both paintings, the "*Medusa*" and the "*Chios*" depict contemporary events, crowded with ordinary people. Neither painting contains individual heroes.

Delacroix was involved with the actual creation of the *Raft of the Medusa* because, as previously mentioned, he posed for one of the figures on the raft. His is the figure lying face down in the lower central foreground of the painting with his head pointing towards the viewer. One arm stretches forward, the limp hand drooping over a piece of timber tied down on the raft with rope. Delacroix

9 Hubert Wellington (ed.), *Painter of Passion: The Journal of Eugene Delacroix* (1995) Phaidon Press Ltd., London, UK, p.21.

repeated the motif of the limp hand drooping over the piece of timber in *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* and *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi.*

In May 1823, Delacroix wrote in his journal "…I have decided to paint scenes from the Massacre at Scio, for the Salon."[213] However, he did not start this painting until Monday, 12th January 1824, after meeting with M. Voutier, who had recently returned from military service in Greece. Voutier told Delacroix many stories about his experiences and left the young Delacroix deeply impressed with him.[214]

Delacroix prepared carefully for this painting, aiming to establish the most accurate historical representation of the people, their clothing and their environment. He studied newspapers, travelogues, biographies, and eyewitness accounts. He also bought, borrowed and copied authentic artefacts, costumes, jewellery and weapons, to provide him with props for his painting.

Once he began work on the painting, he documented it in detail in his journal. Lee Johnson, author of the *Critical Catalogue of the Paintings of Eugène Delacroix* commented that while it was the most fully documented of all his major Salon paintings, these entries essentially indicated the areas of the canvas that he was painting at a given time ….".[215] Nevertheless, his comments also reveal something about his personal and emotional approach to painting. George P. Mras in *Delacroix's Theory of Art* wrote: "Painting was for him the most appropriate mode of artistic expression because of its ability to transmit intangible and subjective content, impossible to characterise in words."[216]

Delacroix refers to some of these intangibles in the following extract from his journal entry, May 7th 1824:

> "… my picture is beginning to develop a rhythm, a powerful spiral momentum. I must make the most of it. I must keep that good black, that happy, rather dirty quality; and those limbs which I know how to paint and few others

[213] Hubert Wellington (selection editor), Lucy Norton (translator), Timothy Wilson-Smith (Introduction), *Painter of Passion The Journal of Eugène Delacroix* (1995) Phaidon Press Ltd., p.13. [is this the same reference as the previous f/note? If so, it would be Ibid, p. 13.]
[214] Ibid, p.19.
[215] Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1816–1831* Volume 1 Text (1981) Oxford University Press, New York, p.87.
[216] George P. Mras, *Eugène Delacroix's Theory of Art* (1966) Princeton University Press, USA, p.36.

> even attempt. The mulatto will do very well. I must get fullness. Even though it loses in naturalness, it will gain in richness and beauty. If it only hangs together! Oh, the smile of the dying man! The look in the mother's eyes! Embraces of despair! Precious realm of painting! That silent power that speaks at first only to the eyes and then seizes and captivates every faculty of the soul! Here is your real spirit; here is your own true beauty, beautiful painting …… There is an old leaven working in me, some black depth that must be appeased. Unless I am writhing like a serpent in the coils of a pythoness I am cold. […] Everything good that I have ever done has come about this way." [217]

He is deeply concerned with the subjective and the intangible. The "good black"… "that happy rather dirty quality", the richness gained from the loss of naturalness; the "embraces of despair"… "the silent power that speaks first to the eyes and then captivates every faculty of the soul".

Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby refers to the "pictorial process and oil paint's materiality" remarking that these features were a big part of Delacroix's approach to his painting, and key to his imaginative subjectivity. He evokes rather than describes, and he uses colour and textural effect to express feeling and to embody experience. [218]

On 9th May 1824, he wrote in his Journal: "My picture is beginning to take on a different appearance; confusion is giving place to sombreness. I have been working on the man in the centre, the seated figure for whom Pierret is posing…." This figure is the striking, superbly rendered, figure of a dying man at the front and centre of this painting, which is reminiscent of a Rubens painting, a *Deposition Central Panel Cathedral of our lady; Antwerp* (1612 – 14) 421 x 311cm, oil on canvas.

Later there is visual analysis of the 'dying man' and the Rubens Deposition. The figures in the Chios painting appear to be a randomly assembled groups of anonymous, injured or dying individuals, probably collected there by their Turkish captors, two of whom are shadowy figures standing guard in the shadows behind the dying man. There are seventeen figures in all, including the invisible, perhaps crushed body, associated with the hand crushed between rocks and visible under the rearing horse on the right side of the canvas. There are also numerous warring figures in the middle ground of the painting, too distant to count.

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[217] Wellington 1995: 33-34.
[218] Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities Painting Empire in Post-revolutionary France* (2002) Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p.240 and Professor of Art History at the University of California, Berkeley.

The figures occupying the lower front of the picture plane are either seated or lying down. They appear to be randomly distributed and there are signs of exhaustion and despair in their limp poses. Those figures, still clothed, are richly dressed in the oriental style. Two turbaned captors, one apparently smoking a nargile (water pipe), the other holding a gun, sit behind the figures on the left hand side of the painting. They are arranged like a stage set. In the middle distance of the canvas is a contingent of energetically warring Greeks and Turks, and mounted horses gallop across the landscape behind them. Further back in the distance, towards the left is a town where a ship is burning in its harbour. Overhead a bilious yellowing sky dominates the upper half of the canvas.

The compositional structure of the Chios painting follows the structure of Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*. There are two adjacent pyramids with groups of figures clustered at their bases. The smaller group on the left hand side of the canvas comprise a seated, impassive man in Albanian costume, looking down at a weeping woman kneeling next to him. She has one of her arms across his lap and the other hand grasps his collar. Two naked people, clasped in a despairing embrace sit at his feet. Occupying a dominant position in the centre left of the foreground are two exquisitely painted figures—one sitting and the other lying on the seashore. The seated woman leans on the shoulder of the supine man who is naked, bleeding and probably dying. One of the woman's shoulders with one of her breasts bared. Perhaps an aggressive hand had pulled her clothes from her shoulder. She leans her arm on the shoulder of the naked, dying man bleeding from a wound in his side. This is the dying man celebrated by Delacroix in his journal entry, May 7th 1824: "Oh, the smile of the dying man! … Embraces of despair! Precious realm of painting! That silent power that speaks first only to the eyes and then seizes and captivates every faculty of the soul. Here is your real spirit; here is your own true beauty."[219]

The dying man at the centre connects the figures across the width of the canvas, forming a descending line from left to right. Beside the dying man is a fearful looking elderly woman in rich garments. Beside her is the dead or dying mother with her naked child crawling on her body, seeking sustenance.

[219] Hubert Wellington (ed.) *Painter of Passion: The Journal of Eugène Delacroix* (1995) Phaidon Press, London, p.34.

Behind the nine figures on the left hand side of the canvas, are two armed Turkish guards. A desperately embracing naked couple sit in front of them. On the right hand side of the canvas, a disproportionately large horse rears. His rider, firmly gripping the reins with one hand reaches for his sabre to cut away the young man who, by grasping his coat, attempts to rescue the naked woman dragged behind the horse. Her whiteness and "Rubensian beauty,"[220] appears in strong contrast to the oriental, racially mixed, appearance of the contemporary Greeks.[221]

Delacroix's use of short, unblended brush strokes of adjacent complementary colours on the garments and in the sky, produce a dazzle which intensifies the colour. Michel-Eugène Chevruel, a scientist who worked for the Gobelin tapestry manufactory in Paris, named the phenomenon "harmony through contrast" published in 1839 in *De la Loi du contraste simultané des coleurs et de l'assortiment des objets colorés*.[222] Delacroix applied this principal in his painting, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* to the 1824 Salon before Chevreul published his book, having observed this effect in the *Hay Wain,* a landscape submitted by John Constable to the same exhibition. Delacroix imitated this effect in touching up his own painting. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu observed that Delacroix had already understood this colour principle through his intense study of the old masters in the Louvre, before Chevruel published his famous theory.[223] Delacroix used tonal modelling to create the effect of volume in the human form rather than using line. This gave the figures a solid three-dimensional form in the tradition of techniques used by artists he admired from the past and whom he emulated such as Michelangelo, Rubens Titian and Velasquez.

In addition to the richness of colour and tone, these artists inspired in Delacroix's paintings, another feature of his work that requires attention is the way he distributed light. A careful examination of the fall of light in *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* reveals a striking trait. The highlights on the subjects in the painting do not conform to the fall of light as perceived in nature. The distribution of light is inconsistent. It appears to be a symbolic rather than a realistic distribution. One obvious feature is that the figures bathed in light are the Greeks and those with

[220] Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby "Orients and Colonies" in Beth S. Wright (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* (2001), p.72.
[221] James H. Rubin "Delacroix and Romanticism", p.30.
[222] Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, "A Science and an Art at Once" in Beth Wright (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* (2001) Cambridge University Press, New York, p.94.
[223] Ibid.

shadowed faces are the Turks. Regardless of the positioning of the figures, the light seems to fall on the vanquished and not on the victors. The horse has a head bathed in light, and the rider's face is in shadow. The guards behind the seated figures to the right of the canvas are in shadow, the figures in front of them are lit up and so are the warring troops behind them. Given how talented and observant Delacroix was as an artist it is most likely that the inconsistent lighting emanating from many different angles was deliberate. Delacroix, it is probably true to say, expresses solidarity with the Greeks in this painting.[224]

Many critics condemned the painting for departing from the rules of the academy, but a closer examination shows that he did observe the rules applying to traditional history painting. This is evident in his attention to accurate historical detail in drapery and accoutrements, and in the precision of his depiction of the fire in the harbour, of the distant ships in the water.

The fire in the harbour of Chios was the result of an attack on the Turkish flagship by two Greek fire ships on the evening of June 18 1822, an event that Delacroix recorded in his journal, Monday, 12th January 1824 on the day he began the painting.[225] On the foreshore, the remnants of the citizens of Chios lie exhausted.

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Symbolic motifs and references to the works of other artists abound. Perhaps the most striking is the familiar motif of a dead mother with her living child seeking sustenance at her breast. The story of the dead mother and infant[226] came to Delacroix via unreliable memoirs of the philhellene Colonel Voutier.[227]

The motif of a dead or dying mother and a living child seeking sustenance originated in Greek

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[224] There is another, discussion about Delacroix's research on and experimentation with colour in connection with the last painting in the group, *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*.

[225] Delacroix mentioned the event in his journal: "The Massacre at Scio lasted for a month. It was at the end of the month that Captain George d'Ipsara with I think, a hundred and forty men set fire to the Turkish flagship. The captain–pasha and the senior Turkish officers perished, but the Greeks escaped safe and sound. A ship bearing the head of Balleste, the gallant French officer, as a gruesome trophy put into port at Chios on its way from Candia to Constantinople. The ship was set on fire, and the head of the Heroic Balleste was buried with suitable honours" (Wellington 1995 18).

[226] Winckelmann in his history of the Art of Antiquity refers to a motif described by Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia* 35.36.79. book 35, chapter 36, no. 19. Painted by Aristides.

[227] Colonel Olivier Voutier distinguished himself as a naval officer in the French Navy before he joined the Greek insurrection. It was as a naval officer in 1820 that he played a role in the accidental discovery and recovery of the Aphrodite of Melos. A Greek peasant, Yiorgos Kentrotas found it and was bribed by Voutier to dig it up. It was eventually sent to Paris and the Louvre.

antiquity. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer cites Pliny the Younger. He described a picture by the Greek painter, Aristide the Younger. It refers to:

> "the capture of a town, where a child is seen creeping towards its mother who is dying of a wound; and one senses that the mother is aware of the child and afraid that, with her milk being exhausted, the child might suck blood."[228]

This particular motif tends to occur in plague stories. In relation to that issue, art historians agree that Delacroix's original concept for the painting was a plague theme. A plague had actually broken out on the island of Chios as a result of the massacres and, according to Frank Anderson Trapp, Stendhal had insisted that "…Delacroix's painting had begun as a plague scene…" he referred to the famous plague painting by Baron Gros's painting, *Bonaparte visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa* (1804). which "….had given a certain sanction to the theme of suffering and pathos set within an exotic environment."[229]

Delacroix was an admirer of Bonaparte and of the eminent older artist, Baron Gros, author of the painting *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa*. The red-rimmed eyes of the plague victims was a detail Delacroix took from Gros' painting, and applied it to the dying man and elderly woman in the *Chios* painting.

The dying man is a splendid naked figure lying in the prime position in the front of the canvas. He appears to be wounded and diseased. This figure could be modelled on the figure of Christ in the *Deposition* by Rubens dated between 1612 and 1614. There is a similarity between the construction of the right arm in the *Deposition* and in *Chios.* The arm of the dead Christ hangs limply, the hand twisted back onto itself in a curve that rests against the thigh of the dead Christ. The right hand of the dying man in the Chios painting is curved and resting against his thigh in the same way.

The motif of the abducted woman and the rearing horse allows Delacroix's sensuality full reign. The woman's white skin has a luminous glow against the shadows, which, according to Lee Johnson, is "…tonally modelled in accordance with the ideal of a 'firm yet blended impasto"[230] that

[228] Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *French Images From the Greek War of Independence 1821–1830: Art and Politics Under the Restoration* (1989), p.139, note 58.
[229] Frank Anderson Trapp, *The Attainment of Delacroix* (1970) The Johns Hopkins University Press, USA, p.45.
[230] Lee Johnson The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix A Critical Catalogue 1816 – 1831 Volume 1 Text (1981) Oxford

Delacroix had found in the Spanish portrait he was copying. However, not only is she modelled on a contemporary Spanish painting, she is also modelled on female figures in paintings by Peter Paul Rubens, for example, the struggling female figures in his painting of the *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*(c.1617). [231]

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Delacroix loved horses. He did numerous paintings of horses and his sketchbooks are full of them. He would spend days and weeks observing them. Drawing them rearing and fighting, expressing their power, beauty and wildness, and this is depicted in the rearing horse in the painting of *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* bringing a romantic symbol of the sublime, the wildness of nature, a potent symbol of freedom in a painting about defeat and despair. In reality though, the horse actually appears to be distressed and fearful, as it rears with wildly rolling eyes and foaming mouth. It seems to be captive, not free.

The tableau of the frightened horse, and the struggling woman dragged behind it are both tormented captives, forming a grim scene of abduction and abuse, reflecting the suffering of people and animals. Delacroix's consummate skill in drawing horses creates a powerful image of an animal of great nobility reacting to the horrors of human slaughter. Perhaps Delacroix, a classical scholar nurtured on the Iliad and the Odyssey was thinking of the crying horses in the Iliad. These were the two immortal horses of Achilles, who went into battle with their driver Patroclus

> …. "had been weeping ever since they learnt that their charioteer had been brought down in the dust by the murderous Hector…firm as gravestones planted on the barrow of a dead man or woman, they stood motionless in front of their beautiful chariot with their heads bowed to the earth. Hot tears ran from their eyes as they mourned their lost driver, and their luxuriant manes were soiled as they came tumbling down from the yoke-pad on either side of the yoke."[232]

The immortal horses of Achilles may have inspired Delacroix when he painted the magnificent,

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University Press USA page 87. The term impasto describes a thick application of oil paint on a painting. The thickness of the paint usually has a texture that enlivens and accentuates aspect of the painting. Sometimes impasto is applied very thickly, such as in the works of modern painters like Vincent Van Gogh the surface of the canvas gains a dynamic sculptural quality.

[231] Now held in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.

[232] Homer The Iliad 1950 (edited and translated by E.V. Rieu) Penguin Books Ltd UK pages 327 - 328

distressed horse with its “luxuriant mane”, in the Chios painting, struggling against the carnage around it, while Achilles immortal horses refused to move until “Zeus breathed fresh power into the horses”.[233] The horse in the Chios painting seems distressed perhaps by the war and the atmosphere of uncertainty and chaos, perhaps by the compositional structure of the painting, with its empty area in the centre of the painting. This empty area is described by Rosenblum as “…a hollow rush of space…”[234], which may be responsible for creating a sense of ambiguity and lack of resolution in the painting.

However, the empty area in the Chios painting could also be seen not just as a vacancy but as an area of transition, a space to be negotiated. Another painting by Delacroix also contains a significant empty space The *Execution of the Doge Marino Faliero* (1826) a tragedy by the poet Lord Byron could have a different interpretation again.

This painting depicts the moment after the decapitation of the Doge. His prone body is on the ground, a cloth over his severed neck, at the foot of a great marble staircase that rises above his corpse. The executioner, courtiers, nobles and other witnesses are crowded closely together around the perimeter. The space occupied by the staircase is large, perhaps a third of the entire picture plane. That space too seems to resemble a ‘hollow rush of space’, with the empty steps rising above the corpse inexorably drawing the eye to the space and away from the crowded perimeter. However, in this case there is no sense of transition. In this painting the empty staircase is more of a barrier that a place of transition. The cold white marble of the steps creates a barrier above the corpse and keep the people on the edges against the walls, the space in between feels inhospitable. Who would dare to step over the corpse on their way up or down the stairs?

Among the many features of the painting that continue to attract attention from the viewer, it is the sense of ambiguity and lack of resolution that continues to draw one’s attention. It points perhaps to a degree of uncertainty in the artist. We know he is ambivalent about being the leading romantic, so perhaps the artist also finds himself divided between the romantic, erotic appeal of orientalism and the disciplined austerity of classicism. At this point in his career, it appears he is not quite

[233] Ibid page 328
[234] Robert Rosenblum and H. W. Janson, *Art of the Nineteenth Century Painting and Sculpture* (1984) Thames & Hudson, London, p.126.

ready to commit himself to one style and one set of ideas. The next discussion regarding the reception of his painting offers some further insights

Reception

The full title of the painting in the Salon Livret of 1824 was quite a lengthy title, starting with the name of the painting, describing the scenes, and suggesting people consult media sources.

Scenes from the Massacres at Chios: Greek Families Awaiting Death or Slavery, etc. (*see the various reports and newspaper accounts*). If we were to apply a photographic metaphor, the group of people arranged across the front of the painting would represent a snapshot of the massacre, implying that it is a cropped fragment of a larger image. The cut off edges on each side of the canvas support the idea that the painting is a cropped segment of the whole image, implying that other groups of people are languishing on the ground on either side of the group of people we can see, and who are also awaiting their fate.

Delacroix's invitation to the viewer to consult the media is interesting. It may be the case that he has doubts about the painting and his capacity to communicate his own perceptions of the event. Perhaps he hoped that by inviting the audience to read the same information, it would also move them. Unfortunately, as we shall see below, few critics liked the painting.

Delacroix was awarded a medal, second class, and the painting was acquired by the state for 6,000 francs, in those days, "…a generous sum…."[235] It hung in the Musée du Luxembourg[236], until November 1874, when it was transferred to its current position in the Musée du Louvre .[237] Given the "storm of controversy unleashed"[238] by the painting at the time, the government showed great foresight in purchasing it.

This painting is the most famous visual document of the massacres that took place on the island of

[235] Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1816–1831* Volume 1 Text (1981) Oxford University Press, New York, p.88.

[236] See Fraser 2004: 4, 5. The founding of the Luxembourg Museum for Living Artists in 1818 was an important innovation. By this means the Restoration distanced itself from the Louvre's association with Napoleon, by establishing a new museum dedicated to the display of contemporary art, but it also embarked on a program of exhibitions and commissions to encourage artists to produce works favorable to the monarchy and the post Napoleonic administration

[237] During Delacroix's lifetime, it was included in the *Universelle* exhibition in Paris in 1855, and a year after his death, in 1864, was shown in the *Bd Italiens* in Paris. In the twentieth century, it has been exhibited in Louvre exhibitions in 1930 and 1936, in London in 1959, and in Paris in 1936 and 1968–9

[238] Elizabeth A. Fraser Delacroix, *Art and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France* (2004) Cambridge University Press, UK, p.39.

Chios in 1822: "…the first large-scale Turkish war crime to be extensively published in the French daily press. It remained in the news for several months, from May 17, 1822, until late August."[239]

On seeing the painting for the first time, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* evokes an impression of chaos, despair, rough painting and awkward composition.

Stendhal, writer, poet and art critic was one of three writers commissioned to review the Salon of 1824 in the newspapers, acknowledged some merit in the painting, despite not liking it very much.[240]

> "There is a *Massacre at Chios* by M. Delacroix, an excessively sad and gloomy picture, the equivalent of MM. Guiraud and Vigny in Poetry. But the public is so bored with the academic style and the copies of statues which were so fashionable ten years ago that it pauses in front of the ashen, half-finished corpses shown in M. Delacroix's picture."[241]

He disliked the painting because it lacked technical brilliance and the polished surface of many paintings on display at the Salon of 1824. The flaws in *Scenes from the Massacres of Chios*, such as the strong emotional effect, with the appearance of the "ashen, half-finished corpses" were the drawcard, actually attracting his and the public's attention.[242] Other critics however were not as accommodating as Stendhal had been.

Robert Rosenblum, a prominent American art historian and curator, when writing an updated history of this period from the perspective of "an active involvement with historical events" [243], endorsed the academy's longstanding and inflexible adherence to classicism as the most acceptable style for history painting. For him, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* seemed to stray too far from the classical model developed by Jacques-Louis David and his school.

He added: "Even by the standards of 1918, as defined in *The Medusa* …this painting was a shocking assault on the great traditions of history painting… Gros himself whose *Pesthouse at Jaffa,* prefigured these exotic horrors, could only quip. 'It's the massacre of painting' …condemning it as a painting not only without a hero but even without a core… where we might expect a heroic

[239] Nina M. Athanassoglou-Souyoujoglou, *French Images from the Greek War of Independence 1821–1827: Art and Politics Under the Restoration,* Dissertation (1980) Princeton University, p.39.
[240] David Wakefield 1973: 88.
[241] Ibid, p.92.
[242] Ibid, p.92.
[243] Robert Rosenblum and H. W. Janson, *Art of the Nineteenth Century Painting and Sculpture* (1984) Thames & Hudson Ltd., London, UK, Preface and Acknowledgements, p.8.

climax, is a hollow rush of space that carries us across scorched plains, domestic rubble and gloomy skies to a faraway combat, the death rattle of this brutal conquest...."[244]

Rosenblum's response to the painting in the twentieth century was as negative as that of the influential critics of the nineteenth century. His expression, the "hollow rush of space", however derogatorily meant by him, may, on the contrary, have been welcomed by Delacroix. Where Rosenblum saw that part of the painting as an area lacking substance and meaning, his very expression of rejection the 'hollow rush' is full of energy. The contradiction between the notion of emptiness and the forceful sound of movement may have been recognition, however reluctantly expressed, that he felt something of what Delacroix was grappling with. That Delacroix was grappling with impressions and ideas that do not fit because they occur between the defined, filled spaces. They are the things that arouse ambivalence, ambiguity and doubt in people's minds.

Baron Gros' comments on this painting were particularly hurtful to Delacroix who had basked in the glory of this highly respected senior artist's praise two years previously. Delacroix's first salon entry the *Barque of Dante* in 1822 so impressed Gros that he invited Delacroix to join his studio. Conversely *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* caused the same formidable Baron Gros, senior artist, academician and influential member of the Salon Jury to forcefully reject this painting contemptuously describing it the "massacre of painting".

Delacroix, deeply affected by Baron Gros's rejection of this painting, wrote the following entry in his journal:

> "I imagine that it was with the *Massacre de Scio* that I began to be an object of antipathy and a sort of monster for the school…Most of those who took my side and made me into a kind of rallying point were really only trying to defend themselves and their own ideas, insofar as they had any. For better or worse they enlisted me on the side of the Romantics."[245]

At this early point in his career, his rejection of romanticism, evident in this statement, simply reveals his ambivalence towards romanticism, which at that time was unacceptable to the Academy, while he still had his career to build. On the other hand, he was not a classicist in the

[244] Ibid, pp.125-126.
[245] Robert Rosenblum, *French Painting 1774–1830: The Age of Revolution,* Grand Palais, Paris, 16 November 1974 – 3 February 1975; The Detroit Institute of Arts, 5 March – 4 May 1975; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 12 June – 7 September 1975. Joint Exhibition Catalogue (1975) Wain State University Press, Detroit Michigan, p.377.

meaning of that time. His devotion to colour and to the freedom and expressiveness of his favourite artists, Rubens, and Michelangelo made it unlikely he could restrict himself to the rigid structure of neoclassicism. This is obvious in *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, which flouts the central tenet of neoclassicism, the necessity for a central focus and a hero.

The absence of either heroes or a central focus, the contemporary subject matter, the lack of order and harmony in the structure, the rich and brilliant colour, the roughness and unfinished nature of the drawing and brushwork were all too radical for the critics. The bright tonal use of colour was found to be particularly offensive, indeed vulgar, because it was generally believed that colour appealed to the lower classes, who lacked education and taste, and who preferred to be entertained rather than to elevate their minds in the contemplation of lofty ideals.

At least twenty-three reviewers wrote about Delacroix's painting in their reviews of the Paris Salon in September 1824.[246] There were comparisons made between Delacroix's *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* and Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*.

Etienne-Jean Delécluze, a pupil of Jacques-Louis David, a dedicated classicist, painter and critic, writing for *Le Journal des Débats* and a stern opponent of romanticism found Delacroix's painting as reprehensible as he had found Géricault's. He said the subject matter of the latter painter's *Raft of the Medusa* "lacked nobility and grandeur, a pictorial charade with nothing to say…the contemporary subject matter demeaning, aiming to please instead of seeking ideal truth…." [247] He similarly condemned *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* describing Delacroix as a "fool hawking his wares from the rooftops."[248]

Some critics viewed this painting as a chaotic assemblage of figures, without a hero or a single heroic moment to elevate the viewer to a higher moral plane." Auguste Chauvin dismissed Delacroix as '"The delirious author [that] meaninglessly gathers together scenes of atrocity, spills blood, tears out entrails, paints agony and despair. *Posterity will never accept such works*, and contemporaries of good faith will tire of them. They are tired of them already."[249]

[246] Lee Johnson's definitive critical catalogue lists all the writers who wrote reviews on this painting.
[247] James H. Rubin 'Delacroix and Romanticism' in Beth Wright (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* (2001) Cambridge University Press, USA, p.28.
[248] Frank Anderson Trapp, *The Attainment of Delacroix* (1970) Johns Hopkins University Press, USA, p.40.
[249] Ibid.

These writers perceived it as a composition with 'horrifying and disgusting sights' and of 'naked or rag-covered, wounded, bloody victims with coarse ugly features'. A 'flagrant destruction of every pictorial rule,' with 'incorrect and trivial' drawing, and no 'liaison and harmony' and a 'chaos of raw and discordant tones', 'a confused collage of figures', 'obstructed space in the middle ground', 'breaking apart of the visual instant'; and so on….[250]

Disgust with the naked or rag-covered wounded and bloody victims, their coarseness and ugliness, were responses that were particularly illuminating. Géricault, like the true leading romantic that he had been in his time, had already shown a particular fascination for "victims with course ugly features" as his five remarkable paintings of "portraits of the insane" attest. He also "frequented the morgues and dissecting amphitheatres of the nearby hospitals…gathering human parts, which he kept in his studio until the stench of decomposition became too much to bear." The result was five brilliant paintings of severed heads and limbs.[251] Delacroix later referred to these works in his journal entry on 13th January 1857: "Subject matter….Painting does not always need a subject matter, that the purely formal qualities of compositions of severed heads and limbs, in the paint and its handling, the light and composition are beautiful in their own right."[252]

In this statement, he asserts the intrinsic value of a work of art and its right to existence regardless of subject matter, didactic, moral or utilitarian purposes. Delacroix was already a close friend of the philosopher, Victor Cousins, an exponent of 'art for art's sake.' He did not recoil from gory images, having already established in his mind the existence of many paths to beauty.

His hero Géricault, who collected human body parts from which to study and learn, was not his only hero. Another, even more illustrious hero of Delacroix had done similar things under much more dangerous circumstances. Michelangelo had robbed graves in the dead of night to study human anatomy, and so too had Leonardo.

Other critics however found the painting praiseworthy. Among those whose praise was fulsome

[250] Beth Wright, *Painting and History During the French Restoration Abandoned by the Past* (1997) Cambridge University Press, USA, p.150.
[251] Nina Athanssoglou-Kallmyer, "Gericault's Severed Heads and Limbs: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Scaffold", Vol. 74 Issue 4, *The Art Bulletin*, College Art Association, pp. 599-602.
[252] Hubert Wellington (ed.) *Painter of Passion: The Journal of Eugène Delacroix* (1995) Phaidon Press Ltd., London, UK, p.301.

was the anonymous critic[253] who wrote in *Le Globe*: "…M. Delacroix has not chosen the moment of the massacre, he has set himself a greater challenge…after they have been wandering for several days, when they are still uncertain of their fate, not knowing whether they will be massacred or sold into slavery. …this subject was much more piteous, and…he despises all arrangement…he has scattered the figures of his painting here and there, in a sort of systematic disorder…for there is no lack of order in his painting, there is a systematic disorder."[254]

The anonymous critic rightly discerned the need for systematic disorder to echo the systematic order of the actual event of the massacre, where the Turkish soldiers impassively and systematically slaughtered so many people. The impassive expression of the mounted soldier drawing his scimitar, preparing to slash the rape victim's rescuer, seems to imply that he is merely doing a slightly unpleasant job— nothing personal.

Flocon and Aycard however, praised Delacroix for linking aesthetics and politics and thus forcing the viewer to face the truth: "…bloodstained corpses, the murderer's crude and insolent figure, slavery, death, and abandonment and despair; Everything here is so natural, that you forget art and the artist and feel as though you are really there at the site of this terrible event. …you find yourself tormented by your thoughts."[255]

Here the reviewer conflates the notion of natural with the notion of realism. There is no suggestion that conventional notions of classical idealism have a role to play here, because he believes that the artist wanted the viewer to perceive the actual event as graphically as possible and to use a method of painting that belongs to the present moment. Graphic, realistic representation supporting a strong narrative was the responsibility of artists in the days before film and photography. In Beth Wright's analysis this painting:

> "….was a clear signal that this historical painting was the expression of immediate and ongoing experience, that it

[253] Historians agree that this anonymous critic was none other than Adolphe Thiers, who, mentored by Talleyrand (rumoured to be Delacroix's real father), later became the President of the Republic of France.
[254] Beth S. Wright, *Painting and History During the French Restoration Abandoned by the Past* (1997) Cambridge University Press USA p.152
[255] Ibid, p.153.

would be conveyed in the visual equivalent of journalistic prose, and spectators should read it interactively and individually, compounding their knowledge gained from one account with their tears after reading another."[256]

She referred to another of Delacroix's history paintings, the *Execution of the Doge Marino Falieri*[257], to illustrate her point that liberal historians of the time believed they should present:

"the immediate representation of that past which has produced us, we ourselves." ….[and the task of history painters was]…. to paint an eye-witness account …. [emulating the] historians' ability to let their readers share in the sufferings of people from near and distant history, so that they may become aware of belonging to that same historical continuum of suffering and oppression…"[258]

Salon of 1824 – classicism versus romanticism

The exhibition at the Salon of the Musée Royal opened on 25 August 1824, with an impressive array of paintings and drawings on show. Contributors included British romantic landscape painter, John Constable, the German romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, the 'father of photography', Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and Eugène Delacroix.

Delacroix, in addition to *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, submitted preparatory works for the painting such as studies of the *Head of a Woman and a Girl Seated in a Cemetery*. He also included his painting *Tasso in the Hospital of St Anna, Ferrara (1824)*. [259] Torquato Tasso was a 16th century Italian poet whose poetry was extremely popular in Italy and who died insane.[260] This painting represented the strain of romanticism arising from tragic themes derived from medieval and troubadour contexts.

[256] Ibid, p.149.
[257] *The Execution of the Doge Marino Faliero* was painted in 1826 and shown in the Gallery Lebrun exhibition for Greek relief. The painting was based on a play by Lord Byron. Delacroix said this was his favourite painting and he kept it with him for many years.
[258] Beth S. Wright 1997:149.
[259] Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1832–1863* Volume 111 Text (1986) Oxford University Press, USA, p.xxi.
[260] Lee Johnson, The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix A Critical Catalogue 1816 – 1831Volume 1 Text (1981) Oxford University Press USA pages 92 - 93

The Salon of 1824 "marked the first real manifestation of the French Romantics in painting, and remained memorable, because of the confrontation that took place there between two great rivals, Delacroix and Ingres."[261] Romanticism overtook classicism in 1824, when rationality and reason had to make room for individuality, passion, emotion, artistic freedom and the free rein of the imagination.

It was a year marked by the deaths of several important artists, and politically, authoritarianism in French politics became more pronounced. Théodore Géricault's death in January 1824 at the age of thirty-three was an untimely end for a great artist. Lord Byron's death at Messolonghi three months later in April 1824, brought the plight of Messolonghi to world attention, intensified the philhellenic movement in Britain and France and pushed French people politically towards liberalism. However, the death of Charles XVIII in September 1824 and the succession to the throne of his brother, the ultraconservative Charles X, unleashed an oppressive and violent regime that pushed many people towards liberalism and underground resistance, exacerbating social and political divisions in France and culminating in the revolution of July 30.

On the surface, the division between romantics and classicists that came to a head in Paris that year was about style in painting. In reality though, it was much more than that. It was essentially about worldviews. The conflict also embodied two strong political stances—liberalism versus conservatism. James H. Rubin, Professor of Art History at the State University of New York at Stony Brook wrote: "At the Salon of 1824, Delacroix and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres emerged as leaders of opposing schools that would take the names Romantic and Classic".[262] Rubin argues that both paintings, Delacroix's *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* and Ingres' *The Vows of Louis XIII,* when compared, reveal the underlying principles of the two styles. The "quarrel between the ancients and the moderns" deadlocked on the argument about line versus colour".[263]

The argument had a gendered aspect that, generally speaking, endowed the masculine principle with the certainty and firmness of line and the feminine principle with the seductiveness and unpredictability of colour. The masculine principle was associated with line and the feminine with

[261] David Wakefield (editor), *Stendhal and the Arts* (1973) Phaidon Publishers Inc.,USA, p.21.
[262] James H. Rubin "Delacroix and Romanticism" in Beth S. Wright (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* Cambridge University Press, New York, p.29.
[263] Ibid, p.30.

colour. Put simply, line represented Apollo, and the masculine principles of authority, rationality, order, durability and eternal truth. Colour represented female principles associated with the freedom of nature, and its appeal to the emotions, its unpredictability, lack of rationality, and seductiveness, meaning colour had the capacity to please easily, and therefore served to devalue art.

This translated into advocates of line favouring classicism (the true style) and aligned with the admirers of Poussin and Raphael while the advocates of colour admired great exponents of colour such as Peter Paul Ruben, Titian, Caravaggio, and Velasquez. They were artists who worked expressively. Their paintings relied on tone not line to define volume. They were less concerned with achieving a polished accurate surface finish on their canvases and were more interested in the freshness, liveliness and spontaneity of a less finished image. The classicists on the other hand relied on precise, detailed linear depictions of form and painstaking application of glazes to develop colour. These techniques culminated in a flawless, transparent surface finish, and static imagery.

The conflict between classicism versus romanticism became the clash of ideals. "Line versus colour, idealism versus naturalism, finished polished surfaces versus sketched incomplete suggestive brushwork. Finally in political terms it became the tension between authoritarianism versus liberalism, monarchy versus republic and past versus present."[264]

Delacroix reveals his attraction towards romanticism in his journal entry on Sunday, May 9th 1824: "I feel that I want to paint my own century. The life of Napoleon is teeming with suitable subjects. I have been reading some poems by a M. Belmontet, very romantic, and full of pathos; perhaps that is why my imagination has been working harder than ever."[265]

The shift away from classicism to romanticism had already happened, but the thing that maintained the former's pre-eminence was the French Academy and its preference for traditional history painting in the neoclassical tradition. The Academy had not changed its position since the middle of the eighteenth century and for most artists, it was important to their careers and their future that

[264] Ibid, p.31.
[265] Hubert Wellington (ed.) *Painter of Passion: the Journal of Eugéne Delacroix* (1995) Phaidon Press Ltd., London, UK, p. 34.

the academy accepted their work, so they continued in the neo-classical tradition, but which, was at times difficult to differentiate from romanticism.

Thomas Crowe considers the emergence of romanticism at the beginning of the nineteenth century as a "…translation and a distortion of the classical inheritance."[266] His explanation makes explicit the identifiable similarities between classical and romantic styles of painting. He refers to aspects of Gericault's and Delacroix's studies and training that led them in this direction, suggesting that their romanticism was partly the result of their decisions to limit their formal training. Delacroix studied in Guerin's studio for about four years but he did not go to Rome.

It is necessary therefore to explain the importance of Rome for the careers of French artists. During this period, the approval of the French Academy, and winning the Prix de Rome was necessary in order for artists to study art in the Academy in Rome. These were essential rites of passage for ambitious French artists.

The Prix de Rome was hotly contested and difficult to win because the academicians, who tended to be rather conservative, tightly controlled the selection process. Their choices often missed the very artists who were to make the greatest impact the history of art. For example, the extraordinary neo-classical painter, Jacques-Louis David, whose paintings defined neo-classicism, and now deeply intertwined with the cultural achievements of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, had to apply three times before he eventually won the Prix de Rome.

Louis XIV had authorised the establishment of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1648, to serve as a school for figure drawing. This consisted of the young artists, under the supervision of members of the academy, drawing from casts of classical sculptures and from live models. The French Royal Academy gained a lot of prestige among European academies.

[266] Thomas Crowe, "Classicism in Crisis: Gros to Delacroix" in Stephen F. Eisenman, *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (2011), p.59.

The French academy organised competitions for young artists and the winners of the most prestigious prize the Prix de Rome, given the funds for a trip to Rome, where they studied Classical and Renaissance art first hand. They were able to work there for four years in the satellite school in Rome established by the French Academy. [267]

Neither Géricault nor Delacroix applied for the Rome prize because they felt they were unlikely to win it, given the rather controversial nature of their work. Géricault eventually did spend three years in Rome perfecting his drawing and painting skills. Delacroix however did not. In one sense, therefore he was more of an autodidact than Géricault. Neither of them subjected themselves to the "confining discipline embodied in the Rome prize procedure with its controlled stages of progress, humiliating submission to repeated judgment, and years of subservient conformity."[268] Perhaps this was a blessing for Delacroix, whose independent spirit and great intelligence was likely to make him highly resistant to rigid methodology and repetitious imagery. He was too interested in originality and imagination to submit to longstanding dogma. His limited classical training probably freed him from the pedantry of the academy and allowed him to develop his free expressive, brushwork, radiant colours and unique artistic vision.

As stated earlier, tensions between classicists and romantics eventually reached boiling point at the salon of 1824, triggered in part by the contrast in two of the paintings exhibited there. One was by Eugène Delacroix and the other by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (b.1780 - d.1867). Ingres was an eminent artist with a long and successful career as a neo-classical painter. He was eighteen years older than Delacroix but outlived him by four years.

Two of Ingres' paintings hung in the Salon of 1824. These were the *Death of Leonardo* and the *Vows of Louis XIII.*[269] The cathedral of the city of Montauban, Ingres' birthplace, commissioned *The Vows of Louis XIII*. In this painting, Ingres depicts an event set in the early seventeenth century with the central characters in the painting, the Madonna and child inspired by the great renaissance painter Raphael.

[267] Petra ten-Doesschate Chu 2012 (3rd Edition)Nineteenth-Century European Art Prentice Hall USA pages 36 - 37
[268] Ibid, p.77.
[269] The *Vows of Louis XIII* would have taken some of the thunder from Delacroix's *Chios* painting, had the two paintings been seen at the same time. Both paintings hung in the 1824 Salon, but Ingres did not get his work there until later in the year, by which time the critics had moved on and therefore failed to review it (Shelton, 2000: 728-730).

There is a hierarchy in the painting between the holy family at the top and the human king at the bottom. The monarch bridges the division between the spiritual and the secular through the notion of the divine right of kings.

The seventeenth century monarch, Louis XIII, dedicates the kingdom of France to the Virgin with the hope of gaining divine support to defeat the French Protestants. Ingres laboured over this painting for four years. In the lower half of the painting, the monarch kneels in the position of an adoring saint while above him in the clouds the Virgin and child look down on him. The motif of the Virgin and child are described by art historian Thomas Crowe as "…an undisguised pastiche of various versions of the motif by its High-Renaissance master, Raphael."[270] The construction of the work contains the calming division of the picture plane in horizontal layers with strong stable verticals supplied by the kneeling figure of the king, and the virgin and child seated on a cloud above. Ingres' typically "precise professionalism", in the perfectly smooth surface of the painting on which no hint of the brush remains. It is a calm and orderly painting of devotion and reverence, with a heroic and religious focus, and with Raphael's art as the standard for the style and technique for the painting. Thomas Crowe however described it as "…a piece of Ultra-royalist historicism…" enabling Ingres to provide the restored Bourbons with "…a theatrical show of past moments of glory…"[271]

Crowes condemnation of the ulterior purpose of the painting was repeated in the online Encyclopaedia Britannica, which describes the painting as a "blatant piece of pro-Bourbon propaganda celebrating the union of church and state."[272] Ingres' painting is set during the reign of Louis XIII, which began in 1610 and ended in 1643, 146 years before the outbreak of the French Revolution. The specific timeframe of each painting is an indication of the significant gap in the outlook and attitudes of the two artists and by implication, the growing divisions in French society.

Delacroix paints his own time and Ingres turns to the distant past. Ingres' painting depicts a utopian spiritual past with heaven and earth in harmony. Delacroix depicts the chaos and destruction wrought by technological, social and political change. Ingres' painting turns away from the present.

[270] Thomas Crow "Classicism in Crisis: Gros to Delacroix" in Stephen S. Eisenman (ed.) (2011 4th edition.) *Nineteenth Century Art A Critical History* Thames and Hudson Ltd London.
[271] Thomas Crowe, Patriotism and Virtue: "David to the Younger Ingres" in Stephen F. Eisenman (ed.) *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (4th edn.) (2011) Thames & Hudson, London, UK, p.80.
[272] https:www.britannica.com/topic/Vows-of-Louis-XIII.

Delacroix's painting stands in the present. Ingres looks back to pre-revolutionary France with a divinely ordained monarchy. Delacroix on the other hand attempts to express the real experience of individuals in the throes of chaotic war by depicting a tragic event in real time in the painting *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios.* The scenario played out here between these two paintings reveals the striking differences in the preoccupations of each artist. Delacroix attempts to grapple with the lived reality of his time while Ingres looks to the past where they believed that life was much better than the present.

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After the fall of Napoleon however, things changed. The static compositions of the classicist, the repetition of classical motifs, and their tendency to look back to antiquity led to the production of paintings that were boring, according to Stendhal. Nevertheless decades of chaos and change had caused dedicated classicists like Ingres to cling to their perception of the immutable, eternal constancy in Greek art. In their view the ancient Greeks had already achieved perfection and all artists had to do was copy the ancients and strive to emulate them. Ingres' famous words to his students refer to the view current at the time: that they had to copy nature in order to see it well and so they must study the antique and the masters.[273] The following, often quoted statement, indicates his profound resistance to change. "Let me hear no more of that absurd maxim: 'We need the new, we need to follow our century, everything changes, everything is changed'. Sophistry – all of that! Does nature change? Do the lights and air change, have the passions of the human heart changed since the time of Homer? 'We must follow our century': But suppose my century is wrong?"[274] Ingres was the only person left to fill the role of leading classicists. Jacques-Louis David the creator of neoclassicism had been living in exile since the Bourbon Restoration assumed power in 1815 and he died in December 1825. A quick review of both David's and Ingres' paintings during this period show that the style has shifted and changed somewhat. And was to be detected primarily by the limitations on colour and the dominance of line, otherwise their paintings would not necessarily confirm them as pure classicists.

[273] Joshua C. Taylor (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Theories of Art* (1987) University of California Press, USA, p.116.
[274] Beth S. Wright *Painting and History during the French Restoration Abandoned by the Past* (1997) Cambridge University Press UK page 2

The romantics however had freed themselves from the limitations of rationality and reason because they felt reason was not enough on its own. A powerful example was the deadly outcome of the excesses of reason that played out in the French Revolution. They decided therefore to explore the imagination, feelings, and passions and the teeming subjects of their own century.

"Contraste Simultané"

The scientist Michel-Eugène Chevreul (1786 – 1889) applied the term simultaneous contrast to the interaction between colours located on opposite sides of the colour wheel, which when juxtaposed side by side intensified their strength and luminosity.[275]

The term Contraste Simultané or the 'law of simultaneous contrast' is applicable as a metaphor for the divided nation and for divided artists. Instead of colours clashing and transforming each other, it is the clash of ideologies transforming each other. The tensions and conflicts between classicists and romantics simply reflect the juxtaposition of two opposing ideologies among artists. In politics, opposing ideologies, ultra-monarchists versus republican liberals, highlight each other and could not exist without each other. Contrasting colours illuminate each other and so do contrasting ideologies. The painting, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* had a luminosity of colour not seen before in French art, thanks to the technologies that created a whole range of new colours for artists.

At the age of twenty-six Delacroix astonished, offended and impressed the Parisian art world with this awkward, ambivalent painting of captive survivors of one of the worst atrocities of the Greek Revolution. *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* (1824), was one of the earliest, most original and most disquieting romantic paintings, coming to public attention during a period of dramatic social and political change.

In Europe the overthrow of the old order that began in the eighteenth century with the French Revolution, continued to spark uprisings during the nineteenth-century with the Greek War of Independence being the first insurgency to break out then. During the 1820s, from 1821 – 1827, the Greeks spent six years fighting for their freedom after four centuries of Turkish occupation. From this point of view, it was a very important revolution, because it had the effect of reminding

[275] For a more detailed discussion on Chevreul see page 94

Europeans to consider where their values and ideals of democracy, freedom and equality originated. The struggle of the Greeks reminded them of the importance of these values, and their past defence of them with the crusades, in which France played a very big part. Such sentimental attitudes to Greece influenced many people to go to Greece to fight for the Greek cause as philhellenes, but governments had many difficulties managing the peace after the defeat of Napoleon and so they ignored the atrocities committed in Greece for most of the war.

Not only did governments have to manage the peace, they needed to keep an eye on the balance of power in Europe. They did not trust each other, and therefore the alliances between them were unstable. They were always on the alert for any signs that the Ottoman empire was collapsing because they did not want to miss out on their share of the spoils of the empire should it collapse. These governments were also very conservative. In France in the 1820s under Charles X, an extremely authoritarian, ultraconservative regime was in power, deeply immersed in the task of returning the country to the pre-revolutionary conditions of the ancient regime.

The political situation continued to worsen in France. The alienated liberals went underground and intensified their resistance, as the rift widened between the conservatives and liberals. Artists reflected this in their work. They too divided along ideological lines and a dramatic rift between the classicists and the romantics opened up at the Salon of 1824.

The visual analysis of the painting, its critical reception and the discussion about the Salon of 1824 enlarges on issues of tensions between the old order and the new order, between those who embraced change and those who resisted it, divided France politically and artistically.

The role of neoclassicism in French art in relation to this point is quite illuminating. Before and during the French Revolution and the Empire, neoclassicism stood for progress and change, for liberty and freedom. After the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of the monarchy, neoclassicism continued to be the official style, but the new regime exiled its creator and greatest exponent, Jacques-Louis David, and his paintings locked away out of sight. Neoclassicism, having dominated French art for over thirty-five years was an ideological style that was no longer relevant. There were no more heroes, the hopes and dreams of the revolutionaries had drowned in blood, and the world had changed. From 1815 on there was a new world order in place. Foreign troops occupied

France, Vienna dominated Europe and many people turned inward.

Romanticism, sometimes regarded as the antithesis of neo-classicism, emerged during the period of the Bourbon Restoration (1814/15 – 1830). The conservative, backward looking regime created a new social context or perhaps a return to the past, by restoring the wealth and privilege of the church and the aristocracy. They also expected artists to paint the new world they were reconstructing, with subjects derived from utopian illusions of the past. It was an imagined world that it was not possible for artists of Delacroix's generation to visualise, because they had known nothing but Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire and had grown up with a very different conceptual framework of life.

Contrasting world-views had long played a part in French art. The tensions between classicists and romantics in the present era were a reconstruction of previous conflicts. One particularly strong example concerns the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns in the late sixteenth century, usually referred to as the quarrel between the '*Poussinists* and *Rubenists'*. Nicolas Poussin represented the ancients, classicism and the supremacy of drawing. Peter Paul Rubens was identified with the baroque and modernism, and advocated the supremacy of colour,[276] The protestant reformation instigated by Martin Luther and the counter reformation of the Catholic church are symbolically mirrored in the these two art movements. The Protestant reformation was iconoclastic and rejected all forms of imagery and decoration as a distraction from the contemplation of the divine. The baroque movement with its excessively flamboyant patterns and colours celebrated a resurgent Catholic church, which chose baroque designs to adorn its churches.

In the 1820s about two hundred years later, a similar conflict between artists took place. In this case, it was a clash between the romantic Delacroix, and the classicist Ingres, at the Salon of 1824. Just as in the previous quarrel, there was a profound difference in world-view. In the case of Poussin and Rubens, there was a strong religious aspect. Poussin took a fatalistic view of life and religion, while Rubens celebrated it. According to Ingres, the Greeks had already achieved perfection in art and there was nothing more to do but to imitate them. His was a static unchanging

[276] Jacqueline Lichtenstein (trans. from the French by Emily McVarish), *The Eloquence of Colour Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age* (1993) University of California Press, California, p.138.

world-view. On the other hand, Delacroix believed that the imagination and nature working together produced unending inspiration for art and there were no boundaries.

Delacroix's ambivalence about classicism and romanticism made his movements between them understandable. While he was strongly influenced by the spirit of his time, for example, there was the lure of Géricault's charisma and talent, he nevertheless remained loyal to his mentors from the past. He still looked towards Rubens, Michelangelo and because of who his mentors and heroes in art had been. While he had great admiration for many artists in the past and present, and he was unashamed to steal from them, the artists he admired most were Michelangelo, Rubens, Veronese, Géricault, and Velasquez, who all valued colour and tone, expressiveness and imagination.

Delacroix was a romantic painter. Official neo-classicism, as defined by the Academy, did not appeal to him enough to follow the strict rules of the Academy. He did not want to spell things out in his art. He, like Jane Austen, "who did not write for such dull elves who did not think for themselves" he wanted to leave room in his paintings for the imaginations of his viewers to enter the canvas and to explore the possibilities it offered. He wanted his painting to be the bridge reaching out to the viewers and inviting them metaphorically, to walk over it and to draw their own conclusion.

Scenes from the Massacres at Chios is not a perfect painting. It has its flaws. It seems to lack focus, the proportions of the figures conflict. They are either disproportionately large, or disproportionately small. Take the dying man at the front of the painting and the rearing horse to the side. Both are disproportionately large figures in comparison with the rest of the figures in the painting. The rearing horse with its exceptionally large head and its disproportionately compressed body, as if to leave room for the writhing cluster of naked abducted woman, while there is a rather small looking man trying to rescue her by clutching the horse's saddle. On the other hand the dead mother with the hungry child in the bottom corner at the front of the painting seem to be too small for their location, which is closest to the viewer and therefore should be larger than the figures behind them.

There is also the strange phenomenon of the multidirectional fall of light. It is difficult to account for

the apparent randomness of the play of light and shade on the subjects. There is the contrast between the strongly illuminated horse's head, the shadowed face of its rider and the shadowed body of the horse. Even the raised foreleg of the horse, which should be in full light, is in shadow, while the faces and bodies of the Greeks are lit up. The foreground, middle ground and sky appear to be in strong Mediterranean sun, yet there are also unaccountable shadows. We could attribute some of these anomalies to Delacroix's youth and inexperience and to the fact that he never travelled to Greece. In fact, he did not go to any place on the Mediterranean until he went to North Africa in 1832.

Perhaps his intention was to make the lighting symbolic. The suffering innocent victims bathed in light, while the victors are shadowed and sinister. By highlighting the faces of the victims, he introduces a strong emotional element to the painting. The light on their faces emphasises the variety of emotions they experience. There is large spectrum of feelings. In the face of the man in traditional costume to the left of the painting, there is numb resignation. The bowed head of the woman leaning on the shoulder of the dying man, indicates, despair, resignation and exhaustion. The elderly woman at the front seems to be expressing fear.

Despite its flaws however, the painting has enormous power. It contains many exquisite images, which demonstrate his exceptional talent, something that the more astute critics such as Stendhal recognised. Nor is surprising therefore, that one of the most important poets and critics of that era, Charles Baudelaire was deeply fascinated by Delacroix, following him around and writing extraordinary reviews about him and his work.[277]

Was it intentional or accidental that he decided not to slavishly imitate nature by strict adherence to natural sources of light, but instead to distribute light somewhat randomly in the painting?

Perhaps this random distribution of light and its symbolic effect was and experiment conducted in the search for something new in painting. The air of uncertainty in the painting seems to support such a suggestion. In seeking for something new therefore, perhaps the air of uncertainty he created in the painting allowed viewers to reconstruct reality for themselves, engaging the viewer in decoding artistic meaning just as the artist must do, making artist and viewer complicit in defining

[277] Charles Baudelaire (born 1821 died 1867), was much younger than Delacroix, who was 23 years older that him.

or redefining reality.

CHAPTER 5
"ΟΙ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟΙ ΠΟΛΙΟΡΚΗΜΕΝΟΙ" – THE FREE BESEIGED – *GREECE ON THE RUINS OF MESSOLONGHI*

Figure 2: Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi (1826). Oil on canvas (2.08 m x 1.47m), Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille.

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is Delacroix's painting, *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*, which he painted in 1826 for the exhibition to raise funds in support of the Greek cause. The painting was a tribute to the fall of Messolonghi, in honour of the extraordinary heroism of its inhabitants and their deaths.

According to authors, William St Clair and Albert Boime, it was widely acknowledged that the French were the most avid philhellenes of all, and that philhellenism intensified in the populations of Britain and France, particularly in France where philhellenic ranks exceeding that of any other European country. William St Clair wrote: "The scale of philhellenism that occurred in France alone in 1825 and 1826 was particularly astonishing,"[278] and Albert Boime wrote: "…..French support eventually became the largest demonstration of militant philhellenism."[279] This chapter draws attention to the phenomenon of French philhellenism and the nature of the relationship between Greece and France during this period.

Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi was Delacroix's first allegorical painting on a contemporary theme. It represented another radical step in his art, because of the way in which he merged classicism and romanticism in this painting.

At this point in his career, Delacroix had already achieved considerable recognition. The state had bought his major works since his first exhibition in 1822, and these paintings hung in the Luxembourg Museum of Modern Art. When the government bought *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi,* that painting too for hung in the Luxembourg Museum for twelve months after its purchase. Subsequently the painting went to the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Bordeaux, which is where it hangs today.

Growing unrest in France during the 1820s had culminated in the Revolution of 30 July 1830.

[278] St Clair 2008: 381.
[279] Boime 2004: 210.

Sieges of Messolonghi – death of Lord Byron, and the fall of Messolonghi

The Turks had tried to capture Messolonghi since 1822 and finally succeeded in 1826. Messolonghi, meaning "in the middle of a lagoon or lake" or "lake town",[280] was a wealthy port on the gulf of Patra which had been under Venetian rule since the thirteenth century. Fish teemed in its waters, and there was a thriving ship building industry designing, building and equipping naval and commercial vessels for the whole region.

Earlier, in 1777, the Ottomans had taken Messolonghi from the Venetians, but with the Empire in decline, and Messolonghi being located on the south-western side of the Greek peninsula, and a long way from Ottoman oversight, they did not have enough capacity to control it and Messolonghi became involved early in the Greek War of Independence.

After the outbreak of the Greek Revolution and its early success in 1821, Messolonghi was one of the first places in Greece to embrace the revolution. A central government made up of local assemblies to govern the region was set up in the south of Greece. The Assembly of Western Rumeli which included Messologhi, was managed by the Phanariot, Prince Alexander Mavrokordatos, who, while in Italy, had become a close friend of Lord Byron.[281] His name now inextricably linked with the town of Messolonghi.

The citizens of Messolonghi fortified the town in order to resist Turkish incursion and this allowed the inhabitants of Messolonghi to repulse the first siege in 1822. The hopes raised by the arrival of Lord Byron's on January 5th 1824, among the besieged citizens of Messolonghi, to whom he brought arms, money and equipment to reinforce the garrison and the resistance was short lived. He died three and a half months later, in April 1824, leaving all financial matters unresolved. Byron's death was a blow for the Greek Revolution, but it also attracted enormous international attention: "….his death in the cause of Greek freedom helped to keep interest in the plight of the insurgents alive among an admiring European readership," wrote historian Richard Clogg.[282]

[280] Today this area is known as the Messolonghi – Aitoliko lagoons complex and it is one of the most important Mediterranean wetlands. It is protected by the Ramsar Convention, formally known as the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as waterfowl habitat. It is also listed in the Natura 2000 network of protected areas in the territory of the European Union.

[281] C. M. Woodhouse, *Modern Greece: A Short History* (1968) Faber and Faber Ltd., UK pp. 128-137.

[282] Richard Clogg, A Concise History of Greece (2nd edn.) (1992) Cambridge University Press, UK, p.38.

The Sultan however was determined to break the resistance of the Messolonghites,(the people of Messolonghi) and he persisted until he succeeded

He sent French-trained Egyptian troops to maintain the blockade and deprived the resistance of food and other supplies. By April 1826 the people of Messolonghi, beset by starvation and disease, had no other choice but to attempt an escape. They breeched the city walls in three places, hoping in that way to introduce an element of surprise and to distract the Egyptians while they attempted to flee across a moat on makeshift bridges but the Egyptian troops were waiting for them when the first sortie appeared. Someone had betrayed the Greeks. The escaping Greeks were chased back through the walls of the city, followed by well-armed, highly trained Egyptian troops who proceeded to 'slaughter, plunder and burn' everything in their way."[283]

The fall of Messolonghi was a turning point in the fortunes of the Greek insurgents, and at this point, they found they were in real danger of losing the war. But the citizens of Messolonghi had prepared one last act of defiance.

According to the account of August Fabre, the French chronicler,

> "The old the sick and the wounded, led by the town elder, Christos Capsalis, were to remain and take refuge in the powder magazines. [the Turks] surrounded the powder magazines…tried to break its doors…climb through its windows …trying to demolish it in order to get inside. At this point Capsalis cried, 'Remember me O Lord ….' and detonated the cache. The explosion was so strong that the houses nearby crumbled, large cracks were opened in the ground underneath them and the sea, forced out of its bed, flooded an entire neighbourhood of the city. Two thousand "barbarians" died with Capsalis,"[284]

Only 2000 people escaped. It was estimated that 4000 died and 3000 mainly women and children were captured[285]and sent to the slave markets.

The news of the fall of Messolonghi made headlines around the world. In France, Germany and Switzerland community responses included "…a flood of poems, songs, musical plays, essays and sermons," accusing their governments, all Christian powers, of "shamefully neglect[ing] the Greek cause."[286]

[283] Athanssoglou-Souyojoglou (1980), pp. 98-99 (Dissertation).
[284] Athanassoglou-Kallmyer (1989), p. 67.
[285] David Brewer *The Greek War of Independence The Struggle for Freedom from Ottoman Oppression* (2001) Overlook Duckworth UK page 286.
[286] Ibid, 286-7.

The power of public opinion and the power of art created a formidable opposition to the deeply conservative and increasingly ineffectual Congress of Vienna. The governments of France and were put under enormous public pressure to come to the aid of the Greek insurgents.

Exhibition – "au profit des Grecs"

Rising Philhellenism and the savage dramas of the Greek War of Independence attracted powerful supporters such as the states-man and writer, Chateaubriand to its cause. When the conservative government of Charles X sacked him, he wasted no time in joining the liberals.

There he organised an exhibition to raise ransom money for Greek women and children of Messolonghi, who had been sent to the Egyptian slave markets.[287] The exhibition, "au profit des Grecs" first opened its doors at the Galerie Lebrun on 17 May 1826, twenty-six days after the fall of Messolonghi, when French philhellenism at its peak.[288] "…there never was such prolific imagery related to the Greek War of Independence as there was in the years 1826–27…" wrote art historian and authority on this period in French art, Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer.[289] She commented that the liberals made the Greek cause their own founding the Paris Comité Grec and organising benefit exhibitions. The exhibition of 1826 contained over two hundred pictures from well-known artists such as Delacroix, Ingres, Horace Vernet and Gros, and seven paintings by Jacques Louis David, who had died in exile five months earlier in December 1825.

David's regicidal past was a source of contention among conservatives. They resented the posthumous public recognition given him. He had been a regicide and the principal artist and cultural architect of the French Revolution, but his reputation as the greatest master of the French school, and the greatest neoclassical artist in France, was impossible to overlook. Only the hard-line conservatives wanted to prevent the inclusion of Jacques-Louis-David in this exhibition. One of his works, *Leonidas at Thermopylae* (1814), was a large and dramatic classicist painting depicting the doomed king of Sparta, Leonidas and the three hundred Spartans preparing to sacrifice themselves to the oncoming Persian army in 480 BC, in defence of their land, in the second of the Persian wars.

[287] Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* (2002) Yale University Press, USA, p.317.
[288] Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *French Images from the Greek War of Independence 1821 – 1830: Art and Politics Under the Restoration* (1989) Yale University Press, USA, p.100.
[289] Ibid, p.67.

Both the Spartans of Thermopylae and the Greeks of Messolonghi became symbols of courage against overwhelming odds, demonstrating the power of national pride in defending their land. In both cases, "defeat becomes a moral victory."[290]

"At this exhibition, the two conflicting opinions of Restoration politics, Ultras and Liberals met openly on a new battlefield: Philhellenism".[291]

In her dissertation, Nina M. Athanassoglou Kallmyer wrote a detailed survey of art works on the theme of Messolonghi, and the many examples of martyrdom among the Greeks in their determination to gain their freedom. The war cry, 'liberty or death' was a grim reality for them all. French artists, deeply involved in philhellenism[292] and the plight of the Greeks had their own oppression to deal with under the repressive regime of Charles X.

The Greeks and the French were two nations fighting oppression in their own countries, with the Greek struggle for freedom providing inspiration for French artists: Devouge's *Missolonghi* (1828),[293] Ary Scheffer's *Les Débris de la garnison de Missolonghi au moment de metre le feu à la mine qui doit les faire périr (*1827)[294]and *Les Femmes Souliotes* (1827).[295]

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[290] www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/leonidas-thermopylae

[291] Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *French Images* (1989) Yale University Press, USA, pps. 39-41.

[292] Philhellenism means love of the Hellenes (Greeks). It became and extraordinary political force in the 1820s in France and around the world, in response to the Greek revolution against Turkish rule, but it had an interesting birth. Modern Philhellenism was, to some extent a creation of affluent, classically educated Europeans with an interest in classical Greece visiting Greece in the eighteenth-century.
William St Claire, whose study of Philhellenism and the Greek War of Independence is "the classic and still definitive account"[292] of those philhellenes, describes how philhellenism emerged in the nineteenth century: "…the travelling gentleman, with his pocket version of the classics, became a permanent feature of the Greek scene. [they] were amazed at the ignorance they found. They began to lecture the Greeks about their ancient history and established a regular circuit of famous sites to be visited. The Greeks picked up scraps of history and legend and repeated them back to subsequent visitors."[292] It is likely that this scenario was true for some Greeks with little education or contact with foreigners. Knowledge of Greek history was the preserve of foreign educated classical scholars whose knowledge of ancient Greek history was the creation of Europeans and Greeks educated in Europe, and were now passing it back to the Greeks.
Archaeological findings and scholarly work distinguishing ancient Greek art from Roman, increased European interest in Greece. Even though there were debates concerning the genetic origins of modern Greeks, whether they really were the heirs of the ancient Greeks or not, the outbreak of the Greek revolution caused lovers of classical Greece to reflect on other more powerful ideas. This included the idea that these people were most likely to be the heirs of the classical past and the descendants of those who has created Western civilisation. Now they were fighting for their freedom from Ottoman rule. The combination of ideas such as the possible rebirth of classical Greece and a kind of crusade to rescue the heirs of classical Greece from Islam, fascinated people all over the world. It became a magnet for them, drawing them in their thousands to go to Greece and to fight for the Greek cause.

[293] Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *French Images* (1989) Yale University Press, USA page. 67.

[294] Ibid page 67.

[295] Ibid, p.67.

Devouge's *Missolonghi* combines the cause of freedom, religion and self-sacrifice. It depicts the doomed breakout group of men, women and children escaping across a makeshift bridge over the moat that surrounded the town of Messolonghi. Some look longingly back to those left behind, others are praying while some men lead the charge to freedom with the priest behind them, reaching out his hand to bless them. Flags emblazoned with the cross flutter above them. The painting exudes an atmosphere of faith, hope and fatalism because they are prepared to die for freedom: "A sacred enthusiasm inspire[d] them."[296]

Ary Scheffer, a devoted liberal and philhellene and well known to Delacroix, based his Messolonghi *Les Débris de la garnison de Missolonghi au moment de metre le feu à la mine qui doit les faire périr* on the dramatic episode of firing the powder magazines.[297] Scheffer's other painting *Les Femmes Souliotes* refers to an event that occurred in 1803, twenty-three years before the fall of Messolonghi. In this painting, Scheffer commemorates the mass suicide of the Souliot women who chose death rather than to be captured by the Turks.

Also familiar to the French was the story of the city of Parga. It had been a British protectorate until they sold it to Ali Pasha the sadistic and authoritarian ruler of Epiros in 1819. The people, knowing how vicious Ali Pasha was, resolved to walk away rather than submit to his rule. They disinterred their dead and burned them rather than leaving them to be desecrated by Turkish hands. The event was celebrated by French poets and writers, among them a radical poet named J. Viennet. He used the story of Parga in a poem that was in reality "a defence of the cause of Liberty and Liberalism everywhere."[298]

The appearance of Delacroix's *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* in Galerie Lebrun in July 1826, coincided with the rising tension between the Ultras and the liberals. Assisted by growing Philhellenism among Liberals, it emboldened artistic defiance among some artists including Delacroix. For him this would be the most overtly partisan political period of his life.

However his painting, about the fall of Messolonghi, was one of many works of art celebrating the martyrdom of the Greeks in the cause of freedom at the exhibition.

[296] Ibid, p.69.
[297] Ibid, p.72.
[298] Ibid, p.107.

French art and liberalism

The Chios massacres and the fall of Messolonghi were probably the highlights among the many bloody events of the Greek War of Independence, which dominated the international press and captured the imagination of the world. French artists of Delacroix's generation found a limitless source of inspiration, ranging from the attractions of oriental exotica to the exploits of daring new heroes such as Markos Botzsaris. They drew parallels between the heroes of Greek antiquity and modern day heroes, naming them the heirs of Leonidas and Pericles. The struggle of the Greeks, and their attempt to overthrow the yoke of Ottoman occupation, and to regain their Greek and Christian heritage, and their democratic rights and freedoms, touched almost every European heart.

The course of the war was violent and bloody from the beginning. Multiple French newspapers covered it avidly. These newspaper accounts held French readers spellbound. In 1822, the mass slaughter of tens of thousands of innocent civilians on the islands of Chios and Psara had drawn international condemnation and inspired Delacroix to paint *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* in 1824.[299]

Dramatic and bloody episodes of the war between the Greeks and the Turks grew in frequency and magnitude and fuelled a growing international interest in the war. Such events as the death in August 1823 of Markos Botzaris, a charismatic Albanian chieftain fighting on the Greek side, in Karpenisi, a town en-route to Messolonghi, served to fuel international interest even more. Markos Botzaris fascinated Delacroix. He began to make plans to do a painting about him while he was working on *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* in 1824, but that plan came to nought at the time. The idea however stayed with him, and much later in 1862, one year before he died, he did carry out his long cherished plan to do a painting about Markos Botzaris. The painting, *Botzaris Surprising the Turkish Camp,* has since been lost. All that remains is a preparatory oil sketch and a fragment of the final painting; both are in the collection of Jacques Dupont in Paris.[300]

By 1826, French liberals had tied their fate to the Greek cause. The ranks of prominent philhellenes and their resistance against the ultraconservative French government gained in

[299] Chapter 3 of this thesis, *A Way of Drawing Some Attention to Myself* … deals with this painting in detail.

[300] The art historian, Mirka Palioura was fascinated by the painting of *Botzaris Surprising The Turkish Camp* by Delacroix and wrote about her search for the painting. Ευγένιος Ντελακρουά Ο Ζογράφος Της Ελληνικής Ψυχής *Γαιόραμα* Μάρτιος ' Απρίλιος 2002

strength and confidence. Many were instrumental in establishing the Paris Greek Committee and sponsoring the fundraising exhibition at Galerie Lebrun, which, as mentioned before, had been organized by the powerful statesman and writer, Chateaubriand.

William St Clair reports that the membership of the Paris Greek Committee was broadly based and was "brilliant with famous names [among them] The Duc, de Choisel, the Duc de Broglie, the Duc de Dalberg, the Duc de Fitzjames, the Comte D'Harcourt, the banker Lafitte, the publisher Diderot, and Benjamin Constant."[301]

The growing ranks of philhellenes joined the liberal ranks bringing the French Government under fire for deserting the Greeks, forsaking them, and collaborating with the Turks against them. In March 1826 in his address to the Chamber of Peers, Chateaubriand "…denounced the presence of French officers in the Turkish army and among the crew of Egyptian ships which transported Greek captives to the slave markets of the East."[302] The ultraconservative faction fought back, denouncing the "Greek Crusade" as a "radical trap", "…another perfidious device of Liberal subversive propaganda…"[303] which echoed the paranoid words of Metternich: "…the Greeks were part of a universal revolutionary conspiracy centred in Paris."[304]

A year later, at the salon exhibition of 1827, there were twenty-one works on Greek subjects as many artists were now overtly liberal in their sympathies and united romanticism and liberalism in the public mind. Around this time however, Delacroix seemed to be looking around for new approaches to his art, having already contributed some of his greatest paintings to the Greek Cause.

In one case, he moved closer to orientalism. His spectacular painting, *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827), based on a poem by Lord Byron, is now regarded as perhaps the greatest orientalist painting of all. The government however reacted angrily to the *Death of Sardanapalus*, seeing it as a satire on the king. They threatened a government boycott of his paintings if he continued on this path.

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[301] William St Clair *That Greece Might Still be Free the Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (2008) Open Book Publishers UK page 270.
[302] Nina Athanassoglou-Souyoudjoglou, 1980 (Dissertation) *French Images from the Greek War of Independence 1821 – 1827: Art and Politics Under the Restoration* University Microfilms International Ann Arbor Michigan p. 117.
[303] Ibid, p. 101.
[304] Schroeder (1994), pp. 618-619.

Nevertheless, his inquiring mind led him to submit another painting to the exhibition. This painting showed an inclination towards naturalism. It was an unusual painting titled *Still Life with Lobsters*(1827). Lee Johnson described this painting as a "highly accomplished still life…(and)….a masterful fusion of still life and Panoramic Landscape."[305] This painting indicted a period of change and reflexion in Delacroix's art practice.

The question of the politicisation of art also came up at this time as the reaction of the government towards the '*Sardanapalus*' demonstrated. Victor Hugo, the author of *Les Miserables,* energetically took up the issue of the merits of the politicisation of art in his review of the Salon of 1827. He wrote: "…As if everything was not political today….the salon is as political as the elections; the brush and the chisel are party tools just as much as the pen……Romanticism in painting is just as political, because it is a revolution; it is the echo of the cannons of 1789."[306]

Byron, Solomos and Delacroix

At this point in the narrative, it is necessary to introduce two other significant personalities, contemporaries of Delacroix, who were also associated, through their art, with the siege of Messolonghi. They are two poets, the English poet and philhellene Lord Byron, and the Greek poet Dionysios Solomos. Both left enduring legacies related to the Greek Revolution, and in particularly the siege of Messolonghi. They never met each other, but it is clear that Solomos knew who Byron was and he was aware of Byron's death at Messolonghi in April 1824, because it inspired him to compose a tribute to Lord Byron, the poem *Έις το θάνατο του Λορδ Μπάιρον* (*On the Death of Lord Byron*). He also composed *Ή Καταστροφή των Ψαρών* (*The Destruction of Psara*), an island in the Aegean where, like the island of Chios in 1822, Turkish troops arrived and devastated the island and its people.

In the following pages are some notes about the two poets, Byron and Solomos, beginning with Lord Byron, in order to establish their place in this narrative.

While it is unlikely that Byron, who was ten years older than Delacroix, knew of the ambitious

[305] Lee Johnson 1981 The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix A Critical Catalogue 1816 – 1831 Volume I Text USA page171
[306] Nina Athanassoglou-Souyoudjoglou, (Dissertation) *French Images from the Greek War of Independence 1821 – 1827: Art and Politics Under the Restoration* (1980) University Microfilms International Ann Arbor Michigan page 117

young painter, Delacroix who had been an avid reader of his poetry for many years was fascinated and inspired by Byron, using his poetry to create extraordinary paintings. His most dramatic being the painting previously discussed, the *Death of Sardanapalus*.

George Gordon Lord Byron was born in London in on 22 January 1788, a year before the outbreak of the French Revolution, and died in Messolonghi, Greece in April 1824. He was regarded as the most famous poet of his age, and one of its most celebrated and notorious characters. He lived a fast and scandalous way of life which sometimes had the effect of disguising his more serious nature. In fact Byron engaged actively with the important people and events of his time. He demonstrated a strong sense of social justice, when in 1812, in his maiden speech to the House of Lords he spoke forcefully against a bill proposed by the government calling for the death penalty for frame breakers. His poetry too reflected on social and historical relations in politics and society[307].

In the minds of many authors, Lord Byron had a strong connection with Greece. For example, this is characterized by William St Clair's decision to include a line from a poem by Lord Byron in the title of his book on philhellenism. The line *That Greece Might Still be Free* heads the title, and on the front cover of the book, there is a reproduction of a lithograph by Adam Friedel, held in the Gennadios Library in Athens depicting *Byron dreaming of Greek Freedom.* On the frontispiece another lithograph allegedly sketched from life by the same artist, Adam Friedel shows *Lord Byron as Philhellenic soldier*. On the page next to this image is a poem by Lord Byron;

"*The mountains looked on Marathon –*

And Marathon looks on the sea;

And Musing there an hour alone,

I dream'd that Greece might still be free"[308]

These tributes to Lord Byron by a scholar of philhellenism, emphasizes the bond between Byron and Greece and his strong connection with the Greek revolution in the minds of Greeks and of scholars of that period of Modern Greek history.

[307] Jerome J. McGann (ed. Intro. and notes) reissued 2008 *Lord Byron the Major Works including Don Juan and Childe Harold's Pilgrimage Oxford World Classics* Oxford University Press USA page xviii

[308] William St Clair 2008 (intro. © 2008 Roderick Beaton) *That Greece Might Still Be Free The Philhellenes in the War of Independence.* Open Book Publishers UK

Lord Byron also played a more substantial role in the war itself, after his recruitment by the London Greek Committee in 1823. They needed his celebrity to increase their status and he had reached a time in his life when he: "…longed for action and he still believed that war could be glorious. Greece appealed to him mainly as a fight for liberty, not as a fight for Greeks as such."[309] Unfortunately, the expedition of the London Greek committee was doomed. When Byron arrived on the Ionian Islands in 1823, he discovered he had been misled, that they were really only interested in his celebrity status, to help them raise money and they had their own unrealistic plans about using Greece as a social experiment.

St Clair wrote: "Byron, almost alone of the Philhellenes of the Greek war of Independence, did not rely on an unspoken assumption of superiority in knowledge and in ability. He tried to inform himself about Greek conditions."[310] He set about raising a substantial loan but he was not able to do much else. The British did eventually show up, but unbeknownst to them, time had run out for Byron, who arrived at Messolonghi in January 1824. Soon after his arrival there, he contracted a fatal fever and died in April 1824.

Lee Johnson, author of *The Paintings of Eugéne Delacroix, a Critical Catalogue* said: "The fall of Messolonghi can hardly have failed to evoke thoughts of Byron in Delacroix's mind as in the public's"[311] especially as Delacroix included several paintings based on Byron's poetry in the exhibition of 1826 in the Galerie Lebrun to aid the Greek cause. These paintings included *The Execution of the Doge Marino Faliero* (1826), *Don Juan* (1826) *The Combat of the Giaour and Hasan*(1826) and *Death of a Turkish Officer of the Mountains* (1826) [312] as well as the painting, *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* which was arguably the most powerful in the exhibition

At this point, it is necessary to introduce the Greek poet Dionysios Solomos because there is an indirect connection between his poem and Delacroix's painting.

Solomos was Greece's first Modern Greek poet. He became the national poet of Greece when in 1823, after composing Ὑμνος εις την Ελευθερίαν (*Hymn to Liberty)* the first two stanzas of the

[309] Ibid page 151
[310] Ibid page167
[311] Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1816–1831* Vol.1 Text 1981, p.70. Johnson here refers to the sudden death of Byron at Messolonghi two years earlier in April 1824, probably of uraemic poisoning.
[312] The paintings were *The Execution of the Doge Marino Faliero*, *Don Juan, The Combat of the Giaour and Hasan,* and *Death of a Turkish Officer of the Mountains* (1826).

poem were adopted as the Greek national anthem.[313] Solomos, like Delacroix, was a romantic he was enlightened, and passionately concerned with the idea of freedom and artistic expression.[314] Although Delacroix knew nothing about Solomos, he is included in this chapter of the thesis because while he worked on the famous Greek romantic poem, *Οι Ελεύθεροι Πολιορκημένοι* (*the Free Besieged*)[315], Delacroix was painting *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*, two kindred spirits engaged in a similar task. The connection between Solomos' poem and Delacroix's painting of *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* is strengthened by the fact that both artists used monumental mother figures, in their work. In Solomos' poem, the monumental female figure is also an allegory of Greece as the personification of freedom. Solomos spent over ten years working on his great poem.

When he began The Free Besieged, he started with a particular method, which he called a design. (We actually know of three such designs.) The first design, or the first draft, of the poem was in short verses. Then he changed his approach and in the second draft, the poem got bigger. In the third draft it seemed to be like a series of paintings. In this draft, where he talked about the experiences of the besieged people of Messolonghi, he idealised the people because he wanted to make sure that it was ideas in the poem that were speaking.

Where he differed from Delacroix is in the source of his romanticism. He did not derive his methodology from French or British romantics but from the German romantics from Hegel and from the philosophical ideas of Neo-Platonism.

Solomos was living on the island of Zakynthos when he worked on the third stage of the *Free Besieged*, living within earshot of the cannon fire at Messolonghi. He wrote this section of his poetic masterpiece while cannons boomed over Messolonghi.

Delacroix painted *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* almost at the same time. He began the painting in Paris as soon as he heard of the fall of Messolonghi. Both poet and painter chose the allegory of a majestic female figure to symbolise Messolonghi.

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[313] Peter Mackridge, *Dionysisos Solomos* (1989) Bristol Classical Press, UK, p.xi.
[314] Stavrou 1986:5.
[315] *The Free Besieged* formed part of a triptych that included *The Cretan and Porphyras.* They are regarded as his best works and *The Free Besieged* as his greatest achievement. Theofanis G. Stavrou, Dionysiso Solomos, 'The Making of a National Poet' in Louis Coutelle, Theofanis G. Stavrou, David R. Weinberg *A Greek Diptych: Dionysios Solomos and Alexandros Papadiamantis* (1986) A Nostos Book, University of Minnesota Libraries, USA.

The woman in Solomos' poem is clad in robes "as dark as hare's blood" with the "Lyre of righteousness"[316] hanging from her shoulder.

Delacroix's *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* is a supplicant in a torn white robe and blue coat wearing a Phrygian cap. Her outstretched hands are empty. She kneels on a rock splattered with blood that crushes the arm of a fallen defender of Messolonghi.

Solomos' Greece on the other hand traverses the land, following the path of the sun from dawn to dusk, observing and commenting on what she sees. She travels widely, seeing people exhausted and humiliated by war and oppression and yet when she sees a symbol of ordinary life, she celebrates it. "this small threshing floor"[317]— a symbol of the making of bread, of the continuity of life. Solomos' Greece is a vastly different creature from Delacroix's Greece. Solomos' Greece is a strong and capable mother who strides across her land, examining it, grieving over and seeing hope in it.

The narrator in Solomos' poem describes the appearance of this metaphor for Greece, this universal mother figure, among the ruins of Messolonghi:

…. I raised my arms and eyes to pray, and there in the middle of the smoke stood a great woman in a robe dark as hare's blood… and with a voice that seemed to me to conquer war's turmoil she began…[318]

In the stanzas that follow, the narrator refers to the hunger and war weariness of the besieged the desecration of the sacred graves of Botzaris and Byron and how the horrible blast of the powder cache that killed the last remaining citizens of Messolonghi resounded for hours. This large woman clad in black represents Greece, the source of all virtues, and of justice and perfection.[319] She is a vigorous, powerful mother figure, striding the earth to see and feel for herself.

In the midst of destruction, hope exists on that small threshing floor an allegory of the persistence of life and hope. Questions of freedom, language and artistic expression were the dominant forces

[316] Peter Constantine Rachel Hadas, Edmubd Keely, and Karen Van Dyck (eds. Introduction Robert Hass) *The Greek Poets Homer to the Present* (2010) W.W. Norton & Company USA page 405

[317] From the translation of the poem by Eleni Sikelianos and Karen Van Dyck in Constantine, Hadas, Keeley,Van Dyck (eds.) *The Greek Poets: Homer to the Present* (2010) W.W.Norton and Company, New York, p.405.

[318] Ibid.

[319] Παπανικολάου (1986,), p. 527.

of Solomos' creative life.[320]

Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi, in torn garments and exposed breasts, stands before a pile of rocks, probably the remnants of a destroyed building. Arranged on top of this crumbling wall, are several human heads, probably referring to the Sultan's demand for bags of severed heads and salted ears as proof of conquest.

He found his creative inspiration revolving around questions of artistic freedom and the expression of the imagination. He believed the role of the artist was to make art that communicated with the soul of the spectator, an idea inspired by Madam de Stael who described art as a bridge between the artist and the soul of the spectator.[321]

Both Delacroix and Solomos shared the romantic passion for the sublime and the contemporary, and both shared a deep admiration for the poetry of Lord Byron.

They both memorialised the martyrs of Messolonghi—Solomos with his poetic masterpiece *The Free Besieged* and Delacroix with his painting *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*. Both artists had a profound effect on their societies, and both artists had a fresh perspective to offer.

Solomos believed in ideas, and that in the end ideas will prevail. He idealises humanity because he beleives that humanity is able to overcome the worst experiences. Mackridge stated that Solomos' poetry made a "…crucial contribution to the development of Greek national consciousness."[322] In that sense Solomos was a fitting national poet for Greeks at the time, because of his belief in the resilience of humanity, a belief that an occupied society could grasp when fighting for their freedom.

Delacroix, with his vigorous painting technique, brilliant colour and imaginative subject matter paved the way for great innovation in French art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The hand of Delacroix can be detected in the revolutionary art of the French impressionists and post-impressionists—Cezanne's art and Picasso's. But his path was not easy. He followed his own instincts and found himself at odds with society and with other artists because of his idiosyncratic approach to his art. It is only with the wisdom of hindsight that we can see he was a visionary and revolutionary painter even thought this was not what he sought. He did not seek either of those

[320] Theofanis G. Stavrou, op. cit., p. 3.
[321] Mras 1966: 15.
[322] Mackridge 1989: xi.

distinctions he simply became more and more engrossed in his practice and his ideas about art. In the end, he was essentially an abstract painter and in that way he opened the doors to twentieth century innovations in art.

The Painting – *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*

Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi ('La Grèce. (Allégorie) Elle est représentée sous les traits d'une femme pleurant sur les ruines') (1826). Delacroix began the painting as soon as reports of the fall of Messolonghi appeared in the French press on May 15 and 16 1826.[323] In August he submitted the completed painting at the second opening of the exhibition. *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi…* was Delacroix's first use of allegory in painting on a contemporary theme. It is a very large painting. Its dimensions are 2.08 x 1.47 metres, making it almost double human size. Lee Johnson describes the painting as a record of a cataclysmic event during the Greek War of Independence, created "under the shock of recent catastrophic war news," similar to the circumstances in which Picasso created *Guernica*.[324]

Lee Johnson also asserts

> "…there is no firm evidence for believing that this picture was intended to be more than a tribute to Greece alone, conceived in much the same circumstances as Picasso's *Guernica*, under the shock of recent catastrophic war news."[325]

Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi is a complex painting, capable of a range of interpretations. For example, the motif of the "dead hand" in the bottom left hand side of the painting may refer to Lord Byron, but it may also refer to Théodore Géricault.

On the other hand, Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby believes that the hand refers to the relationship between Delacroix and Géricault. She argues that the "vivid precision of the draftsmanship" of the hand, in the painting of *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*, symbolises "the trace of a ruptured relationship – all that is left"[326] of the relationship between Delacroix and Géricault, who died on the 26th of January 1824, four months before the death of Byron. Grigsby attributes the hand crushed

[323] Nina Athanassoglou-Souyoudjoglou (1980) (Dissertation) *French Images from the Greek War of Independence 1821 – 1827: Art and Politics Under the Restoration* (1980) University Microfilms International Ann Arbor Michigan page 99.
[324] Lee Johnson *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix A Critical Catalogue 1816 – 1831 Volume 1 Text* (1981) page 99

[325] Johnson 1981:70.
[326] Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* (2002) Yale University Press, New Haven and London page 287

under the stones in the bottom right hand corner of the painting to Géricault's rendition of Delacroix's own hand modelled for the *Raft of the Medusa*.[327]

There is a striking resemblance between Delacroix's hand in the *Raft of the Medusa* and this exquisitely rendered crushed hand in *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*. It is likely that the hand in this painting is a copy of the hand in the *Medusa* because it appears that Delacroix had also used that motif of the dead hand in his first major painting, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*. In that painting the dead hand is dimly visible in the darkened area under the rearing horse in the lower right of the painting. The dead hand that Delacroix reproduces in two of his paintings serves to unite him with two dead friends, Byron and Géricault who died within months of each other, therefore linking the three paintings under discussion here and unites Byron, Delacroix and Gèricault. Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby wrote a detailed critique of this painting[328], describing the motif of severed heads arranged on the debris of Messolonghi as the brutal dismemberment of Greek men and the enslavement of Greek women.

On the question of the propaganda role of the painting, Grigsby also had this to say. She considered *Greece on the Ruins…Messolonghi* was "a masterful and effective piece of political propaganda"[329]. It was also a tribute to the fall of Messolonghi and to the thousands of Messolonghi inhabitants who lost their lives in their fight for freedom. 'Delacroix's Greece' is a powerful, evocative allegory of Greece, representing both the Greece of antiquity and the Greece of modernity. The cloth cap on her head is a symbolic reference to the Phrygian cap[330], worn by freed slaves under the Romans, and Marianne, the French Revolution's allegory for France and the symbol of free, egalitarian, republican France.

There is also another possible interpretation of Delacroix's depiction of Greece. She represents the virtuous mother figure, dressed in blue and white, the colours of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, the symbol of Christianity, and the Mother of Western civilisation. She represents the classical world and the medieval Christian world. Another interpretation relates her to modern

[327] Ibid page 287.
[328] Grigsby, D. G., *Extremities Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* (2002) Yale University Press, Chapter 6 White Slavery, p. 281.
[329] Ibid, p.101.
[330] The pileus is a cap originating in antiquity and associated with the headwear of freed slaves. It has been transformed into a Phrygian cap in France since the French Revolution. The Allegory of France, Marianne symbol of freedom and republicanism, is depicted wearing a Phrygian cap and while the allegory of Greece's headwear is less definitely a Phrygian cap, it is most likely to be so because she symbolises both freedom and slavery. A reference to the habit of victorious Egyptians to enslave the Christian Greek women they captured during their campaigns in Greece.

Greece because she is wearing the garments of a contemporary Greek woman, as a portrait of defeat or near defeat. She represents the tenuous nature of political and social struggle for the fragile and perhaps elusive goal of freedom.

This allegory of Greece has the power of monumentality. She is larger than life, dominating the canvas and towering over the viewers, and she is a beautiful woman with bewitching large, dark eyes and black hair. Lee Johnson suggests that the model for the painting was Delacroix's favourite model, Laure.[331]

Her stance is reminiscent of images of the Virgin mourning over the dead Christ, such as the *Lamentation over the Dead Body of Christ* after the baroque artist Sébastien Bourdon. Lee Johnson argues that Delacroix's preference for the passion and vigour of Michelangelo and the expressiveness of Rubens, is reflected in the passionate expression of grief in this painting. The intense pathos of the Virgin's face, with her outstretched arms and open palms and her grief over her son's lifeless body is overwhelming. Her grief seems to set her apart, enclosed in a world of unbearable emotional pain despite the presence of friends and supporters around her. Delacroix decided to copy it.[332]

This study is particularly compatible with the vigour and pathos of Delacroix's *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*. Delacroix's virtuous grieving mother has all the dignity and purity of the Virgin Mary. She grieves over the fall of Messolonghi, as the virtuous mother, but she is also the violated mother. Like any other women captured in war it is highly likely she would be raped before being sent off to the slave markets.

The garments of the violated mother reveal her body and breasts, sexualising her in preparation for her incarceration in a harem or brothel. The long white tunic embroidered at the open neckline flows down to the red pointed slippers on her feet, leaving her breasts exposed. The tunic billows out around her legs, then it gathers in luxurious folds between her thighs, forming a long dark line between her legs and inexorably drawing the eye of the viewer towards it. Her velvet over garment of dark blue, decorated around the edges with gold braid and bobbles, with its white silk lining that takes on a deep reddish hue matching the slipper, on the shadowed right side of the figure, is

[331] Lee Johnson comments that there is no certain record of Laure's features and no documentation to support this assertion, but other writers appear to accept her as the model.

[332] Johnson 1981: 180. Delacroix referred to this painting in a sketchbook he used between 1825 and 1830. His copy was based on an image on loan from Ari Scheffer of a study of the death of Christ.

closely bound to her body with a yellow ochre sash wound around her slender waist, emphasising her voluptuous thighs.

The painting suggests sexual availability, but it also suggests cool aloofness. The dark, cool hues in her robe and the marble whiteness of her skin convey a chill that no amount of accompanying colour can deflect, neither the surrounding warm red and yellow tones in the robes of the victorious Turkish or Egyptian guard, nor the blood-red sleeve of the man whose arm is crushed under the rocks, or indeed the red of the blood spattered on the rock. Greece is contained in a dark forbidding landscape that distances and isolates her. In this depiction, the symbol of the perfect mother, the Virgin Mary is also the violated mother of Christendom and Western culture, representing the foundations of Western civilisation constantly under threat from Islam.

Another perspective to consider is one advanced by Michèle Hannosh in her catalogue essay, *Delacroix and the Ends of Civilisation.*[333] She sees *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* as a symbol of the fragility of civilisation.[334] The destruction of Messolonghi represents Greece on the verge of annihilation and thus symbolically represents a threat tol Western Civilisation. Delacroix's allegory came into being when the Greek struggle for freedom was virtually doomed, and instead slavery, dispossession and genocide waited. The destruction of Greece became a real possibility were Egyptian settlers to occupy Greece after they had removed its inhabitants. Once symbols, monuments, citizens and historic places disappeared Western culture could also disappear.

Delacroix's Greece stands with her hands open in a gesture of despair, as if to say 'this is it, I can go no further without help'. The mother of civilisation, Greece, alone, abandoned and no longer able to defend herself, appeals to Europe for help—without which she is doomed to defeat.

She is also a modern woman, standing with her hands spread wide in a gesture of mute supplication.

She is dishevelled. Her arms outstretched, her palms held open on either side of her body, as if to say 'I have nothing'. Her face expresses despair and her legs seem to buckle under her. Perhaps the rock she kneels on is a piece of debris thrown from a building destroyed by the exploding powder magazines detonated by the town elder, Kristos Kapsalis, who died in the blast with all the

[333] Michèle Hannoosh in *Delacroix and the Matter of Finish* Eik Kahng (ed.) Exhibition catalogue (2013) Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Yale University Press, USA.
[334] See Eik Kahng et al. in *Delacroix and the Matter of Finish.* (

other people sheltering with him.

Greece seems to petition the European powers for help. Standing upright with the liberty cap on her head, she reminds onlookers that Greece is the mother of freedom. The European powers however were deaf to her entreaties. They were afraid that if they gave their support to the Greeks, it might encourage rebellion among their own people.

Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer[335] explains that Delacroix's Greece also resembles images common in philhellenic publications and illustrations of the time.[336] For instance, the engraved frontispiece for Adamantios Korais's[337] philhellenic pamphlet, Appel aux Grecs, *Salpisma Polemistirion* (1801), issued first in Egypt and then translated into French and reissued in Paris in 1821. The pamphlet depicts a monumental Greece with her arms thrown high, in tattered garments, bleeding and uttering the lament "O miserable me, doomed to slavery". She is surrounded by other symbols of Greece, broken columns, a torn parchment with Homer inscribed on it, a broken bust, and the presence of a diminutive but masterful Turk standing before Greece, scimitar in hand.[338]

Delacroix had been preparing to create an allegory of Greece since the start of the Greek War of Independence in 1821. It is likely that he could have seen this pamphlet because Adamantios Korias was an enlightened humanist, philosopher and linguist who had been living in Paris since 1788 and who died there in 1833.

When Delacroix began his preparatory sketches for Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi, he planned to locate her in antiquity. Then news arrived of the murder of Lascarina Bouboulina in 1825 in a family dispute. Bouboulina Lascarina, was a member of a wealthy seafaring family who inherited considerable personal wealth. During the Greek Revolution, she threw herself and her wealth into the war, building and commanding ships, and fighting and winning battles at sea against the Turks. Upon hearing of her death, Delacroix changed his mind about creating a classical allegory of Greece and instead decided to depict Greece as a modern woman.

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[335] Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer nee Souyoudjoglou) wrote her aforementioned dissertation (1980) and then published it (1989). She studied an extensive collection of painted and printed images illustrating episodes and events from the Greek Revolution. These documents have been valuable resources.

[336] Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer 1989: 97.

[337] Adamantios Korias lived in Paris from about 1788 to 1833. He was an Enlightenment scholar, a humanist and thinker. He laid the foundations for the Greek War of Independence, developed a Greek literary language (Katharevousa) and wrote the first Modern Greek Dictionary. Olga Augustinos, *Philhellenic Promises and Hellenic Visions: Korais and the Discourses of the Enlightenment,* pp. 169-200 in Zacharia, K. (ed) *Hellenisms Culture, Identity and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity* (2008) Ashgate, UK.

[338] Athanassoglou-Kallmyer 1989: 99-100.

He adopted the style of dress worn by Bouboulina and other Modern Greek women at the time and it became a style adopted by fashionable French women during the period of widespread philhellenism.

Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi is dressed in the modern fashion of Greek women at the time. A fine covering undergarment, with a heavier embroidered over garment and it is held together with a long sash would several times around her waist. On her feet are fine red slippers. The garments and the slippers are of fine cloth, not suited to outside activity. They convey the sense that she, like most Greek and Turkish women at the time lived enclosed sheltered lives, rarely moving outside the confines of the family home. The garments have an exotic, oriental appearance, a reference to the oriental aspect of Greek culture at this time, which was the inevitable consequence of four centuries of occupation by the Turks.

The result was the spectacular allegory, *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* depicted as a Modern Greek woman, representing her multiple historical identities, the classical Greek woman, the Modern Greek woman and the woman who had lived under Turkish rule for four centuries. This allegory, of an enigmatic Modern Greek woman, was the foundation for Delacroix's next great allegory, Liberty.

It is no accident then that his first great allegory personified Greece, the mother of western civilisation, which he then transformed into the personification of *Liberty Leading the People,* in the Paris revolution of July 30, 1830, to restore freedom to the people of France by ousting an authoritarian reactionary king.

Conclusion

Delacroix's monumental allegory of the great mother figure encapsulated in this painting is one of a sequence of mother figures in his paintings. For example, there is the dead or dying mother and hungry infant in *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios,* in chapter four; the defeated and despairing mother discussed here in this chapter, and finally *Médée Furiuse – a Force of Nature,* the multifaceted, immortal, murdering and avenging mother in the next chapter, chapter six. In chapter seven, the *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*, mothers, daughters, wives and sisters in the foreground of the painting are all supplicants, again destined for death or slavery.

With regard to Delacroix's painting practice, there appears to be a shift from the overt romanticism such as in *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* to the subdued classicism and orientalism of *Greece on the Ruins…*indicates that perhaps his stylistic and ideological framework is in a process of development. He is still resolving the tensions between classicism and romanticism in his own mind, just as France and Greece struggle to resolve their political and ideological contradictions in their struggle to free themselves from the past and to gain their freedom.

Barthélémy Jobert, senior lecturer in the History of Modern and Contemporary Art at the University of Paris – Sorbonne, and author of *Delacroix,* remarked that there was a certain interest aroused by the painting at the exhibition of the Galérie Lebrun, but most of the reaction was negative. He wrote that Baron Jean-Baptiste Boutard, artist and critic, was one of the few who wrote about the painting. He wrote scornfully in the prestigious *Le Journal des Débats* that he considered Delacroix to be insane: "Talent is evident, struggling in a singular manner with the systematic vagaries and disordered technique of the artist, as one sees gleams of reason, sometimes even strokes of genius, showing through the deplorable discourse of insanity."[339]

Boutard damns Delacroix with faint praise. Like many other critics, he tended to be somewhat obsessive about the lack of precision in Delacroix's paintings and he appeared to be blind to the possibilities that such "unfinished" or "unpolished" works might be a more effective way of communicating the suffering of a society torn between the past and the future, and between war and peace.

Perhaps what Delacroix struggles with in this painting, by bringing together aspects of neo-classicism and therefore referring to ancient Greece and also combining it with the tensions of romanticism, is that he finds himself at a cross road in his art. The tensions in Byron's poetry reflect the stresses and strains in romanticism, a style strongly associated with violence and chaos, which are common features of Delacroix's oeuvre, and the inevitable features of war, chaos and radical social change as well as the quest for freedom, equality and reason.

On the other hand, there was the destructiveness of the Revolution and associated political and social changes. These also left their marks on him and influenced his art.

It was not by chance therefore, that *Greece on the Ruins of Messologhi,* became *Liberty Leading*

[339] BarthélémyJobert, *Delacroix* (1997) Princeton University Press, New Jersey, USA, page. 128.

the People.

We can define Delacroix's mother figure 'Greece' in several ways. She is the mother of Western civilisation, the perfect mother, symbolised by the Virgin Mary and the evil destructive mother figure symbolised by Medea –the subject of the next chapter, chapter six.

While both artists began from the same starting point, their paths diverged in different directions despite the fact that they were contemporaries. Both grew both up at the cross roads of powerful socio-political changes, with an enormous proliferation of new ideas and transformations in art, that still have consequences today.

Delacroix created a mother figure that was an archetypal allegory of the mother of western civilisation and the symbol of Freedom. Solomos created a different mother figure, one that was already free, roaming the earth, the personification of freedom, hope and resilience.

CHAPTER 6
‘MÉDÉE FURIEUSE’ – TOWARDS PAINTING THE ‘OBJET D’ART’

Figure 3: Eugène Delacroix Medea Pursued and about to Kill her Children (1838), Oil on Canvas 122 x 84 cm Lille Palais des Beaux-arts.

Introduction

The French title of this painting is: *Médée furieuse./Elle est poursuivie et sur le point de tuer ses deux enfans* meaning Medea is angry she is pursued and on the point of killing her children.

This chapter focusses on the painting *Médée Furieuse*, also known as *Medea Pursued and about*

to Kill her Children. Eugène Delacroix painted it in 1838 six years after he returned from his visit to North Africa, and twelve years after he painted *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*. *Medea* was one of several significant paintings he did at the time that demonstrated the effect on his art of the transformative experience he had in North Africa. In chapter two, there is a detailed discussion about Delacroix's six-month sojourn in North Africa.

There was another important development in Delacroix's professional life, which took place on his return from North Africa. Adolph Thiers, Minister of the Interior and an admirer of Delacroix's work commissioned him to decorate certain public buildings. Delacroix embarked on the project immediately on his return to Paris from North Africa. He immersed himself in Greek and Roman mythology, drawing on them for symbols, allegories and metaphors suitable for public murals. He completed the murals of the Salon du Roi in the Palais Bourbon (now the Chamber of Deputies) in 1838. He then embarked on the decorations of the Library, which took him nine years to complete.

His wish to "paint great walls of space"[340] that he had expressed early in his career, had now become a reality. Nevertheless, it did not prevent him from continuing to make easel paintings for the Salon for the rest of his life. Prominent among these independent works was the 1838 painting of *Medea*.

The light of Meknes

The role of light plays a significant part in this and the following chapter. As discussed earlier, Delacroix's visit to North Africa in 1832 influenced his whole approach to painting once he experienced the strength and clarity of the Mediterranean sun. By using light and shade more forcefully than ever before in his paintings, it changed his direction and nudged him in the direction of a kind of natural realism. It also moved him towards a kind of abstraction in his figures and forms because it changed the way he executed his images. This encouraged the observer to consider the effect of form, colour and light together, producing recognisable but not completely realistic images, such as those of the neo-classicists. Further discussions of this important direction Delacroix took in his painting come later. Now the narrative returns to the circumstances that led Delacroix to paint *Medea*.

[340] Maurice Serullaz, Curator of the Cabinet des Dessins. The Louvre, Paris (1963) The Library of Great Painters, Harry N. Abrahams Inc. Publishers, New York, p.41.

Perhaps Delacroix's immersion in Greco-Roman myths and legends, which were the main subjects of the murals he was painting, influenced his decision to paint *Medea*. Perhaps the pervasive revival of Greek classicism throughout Europe also played a part. Lee Johnson reminds us that *Medea* was a theme not treated in French painting of the nineteenth century, and this was the case both before and after Delacroix.[341] However, Delacroix's choice of *Medea* as subject at this time was not necessarily as surprising as one might think. His immersion in Greek mythology as he researched images and ideas for his murals and decorative works was a current preoccupation but his preoccupation with *Medea* was of very long standing.

He had been thinking of doing a painting about *Medea* from an early age, but while this was the underlying motivation, probably the obvious precipitating factor, the one that was most likely to be the catalyst for him to do this painting when he did in 1838, is suggested by art historian Dorothy Johnson. She offers an alternate explanation for his decision, identifying a precipitating incident that may have influenced his decision to paint *Medea* at that time.

An incident took place in 1835, three years before he painted *Medea*, concerned the highly publicised trial of Henriette Cornier, a woman who had abducted and murdered a child, apparently in cold blood.[342] As mentioned earlier, Delacroix had been planning to do a painting about *Medea* for many years and it was possible that the dramatic trial of Henriette Cornier may have given him the necessary impetus to do the painting then and there.

The story of Henriette Cornier was bound to appeal to a romantic like Delacroix because violence fascinated him. Indeed his entire oeuvre drips with blood. For example, during his time in North Africa his fascination with violence drew him to an event in the town of Meknes while he was in North Africa where he witnessed a particularly violent scene, which he later painted and which he called *The Fanatics of Tangiers*. These subjects were the Yassouies, a mystical sect of Islam established in the early seventeenth century.

[341] Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1832 (Moveable Pictures and Private Decorations*) Volume III Text 1832–1863 (1986) Oxford University Press, New York, p.80.
[342] Dorothy Johnson, *David to Delacroix: The Rise of Romantic Mythology* (2011) The University of North Carolina Press, USA, p.184.

The style of their worship involved frenzied rituals that induced trances, paroxysmic contortions, and acts of extreme self-mutilation.[343] The painting of the Fanatics of Tangiers was one of several of his paintings, including Medea, in the Salon of 1838. Other paintings included the *Moroccan Chieftain Receiving Tribute, A Courtyard in Morocco* and the *Finale of Don Giovanni.*

It is important to note here that violence is also a defining feature of all the four paintings central to the thesis, and indeed, of most of the paintings Delacroix produced over his lifetime. This obsession with violence could be a factor in explaining his longstanding interest in the story of *Medea*, it being one of the oldest and most violent of the Greek tragedies.

Delacroix and *Medea*

Delacroix's first recorded his interest in painting *Medea* in 1818 when he began working towards an image of her with notations on a sketch.[344] He continued to refer to her from time to time from then on.[345] According to John Kerrigan, *Médée* "preoccupied" Delacroix throughout his working life[346] and "the painting of 1838 points to an intimate identification between the rage of the passionate mother and the artist's experience of his art.[347]

Humphry Wine echoes Kerrigan's comment. Wine wrote that *Médée*/Mídea[348] "preoccupied" Delacroix throughout his working life.[349] Take for example the date of his first designs for the painting, which showed he planned to do it in 1820, when he listed the subject of *Medea* in his sketchbook,[350] before producing his first major painting [351]

In 1823, Delacroix had attended a performance of the highly successful opera by Simon Mayr, *Medea at Corinth*. Scholars have suggested that the costumes, sets and stage décor of the opera probably influenced Delacroix's paining of *Medea*.[352] Lee Johnson, author of the critical catalogue

[343] Frank Anderson Trapp, *The Attainment of Delacroix* (1970) The Johns Hopkins University Press, USA, p.138.
[344] Louvre sketchbook RF 9153, fol. 8: he wrote Médée tue ses 2 enfants.
[345] Dorothy Johnson 2011: 178.
[346] John Kerrigan in *Revenge Tragedy Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, New York, p.88, quotation Humphry Wine et al., *Tradition and Revolution in French Art 1700–1880*: *Paintings and Drawings from Lille*, Catalogue of a National Gallery Exhibition (London, 1993), 116.
[347] Ibid, John Kerrigan:89.
[348] This is a transliteration of the Greek name.
[349] Quotation in Humphry Wine et al., *Tradition and Revolution in French Art 1700–1880*: *Paintings and Drawings from Lille*, Catalogue of a National Gallery Exhibition (London, 1993), pp. 88, 116.
[350] In the Louvre sketchbook RF 9153, fol. 8: he wrote Médée tue ses 2 enfants.
[351] Delacroix's first major painting was the *Barque of Dante* which was very well received at the Salon of 1822.
[352] Dorothy Johnson 2011:172.

of Delacroix's paintings wrote that there was an oil sketch[353], and twenty-seven sheets of preparatory drawings[354] for this painting at the posthumous sale of the contents of Delacroix's studio in February 1864. Perhaps the sheer volume of these preparatory studies is the strongest indication of his obsessive interest in the subject of *Medea*. Eventually, he produced four completed paintings of her.

When the painting of *Medea* appeared at the Salon of 1838, the overwhelming public response was to link the painting to the contemporary story of Henriette Cornier. Numerous prints of the painting circulated after his death in 1856. The artist, Emile Lassalle also made lithographic copies of the 1838 *Medea*.

Medea is a monumental painting of a woman, one of a group of such figures. They include *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*, and *Liberty Leading the People, Revolution of July 30*. The striking strength, authority and mystique of these massive figures is found in other depictions of women in his paintings. These include the figures in *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios,* such and in particular the 'Rubenesque' woman being dragged behind the horse. These arresting figures of women raise the issue of Delacroix's relationship with women in general, and his relationship to his mother in particular.

Delacroix and his Ambivalence towards Women

Delacroix was a sensuous man who had many relationships with women throughout his life. In spite of that, he never married. Some of these relationships were serious and long lasting. His first affair was with his sister's servant girl, and English girl called Elizabeth Salter, whom he wrote about in the first entry in his journal on Tuesday, September 3rd 1822. He also had serious relationships with some of his models, and later several important and longstanding love affairs, some of them with married women.

[353] ('[Esquisse] Médée Furieuse. Variant du tableau qui est au musée de Lille') was purchased at Delacroix's posthumous sale in February 1864 for the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille where it is currently held. Johnson suggests that this oil sketch was done as early as 1836, referring to Delacroix's correspondence with his close friend Villot in July of that year: 'J'ai commence la Médée qui se débrouille; nous verrons' (*Correspondance* 1. 416) and in an announcement in February 1837 in *Le Siècle* that the *Médée furieuse* was one of the paintings Delacroix was working on (Catalogue Vol. III 1986:73).

[354] The twenty-seven sketches were sold to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille (Johnson 1986 Vol.111 80).

He had an important long lasting relationship with George Sand, maintaining a close friendship with her long after she left him for Frederick Chopin. However, when she introduced her new lover Frederick Chopin, to her past lover, Eugène Delacroix, a very strong friendship quickly developed between the two men. Delacroix even went to the lengths of buying a piano and installing it in his studio so that Chopin could play while he painted.

In general, though Delacroix was quite ambivalent about women. On the one hand, he longed for a close relationship on equal terms with a woman. Writing in his journal in 1823: "Now I think of it, the severest wound life inflicts is this inevitable solitude to which our hearts are condemned. A wife who is one's equal is the greatest of all blessings."[355]

On the other hand, he expressed mistrust and doubts about women. He revealed these doubts in his comments to his nephew in 1830 in which he relegated women to the status of an ornament, an *objet d'art*:

> "A woman is only a woman, always basically very like the next one ….. a woman was an *objet d'art*, delightful and stimulating but – if one allowed her on to the threshold of one's heart – a disobedient and troubling kind of *objet d'art*, one that would glutinously devour a man's time and strength…."[356]

In his journal entry on Wednesday 7th March 1824, he complained that women sapped him of his strength and interfered with his work. He wrote: "This morning Hélène (one of his favourite models) came. Oh shameful…..I could do nothing."[357]

While painting *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* … he wrote about his impatience for the arrival of his favourite model at the time Emilia, and his anxiety that she would consume all his energy and prevent him from working.

His ambivalence about women, and his passion for women, combined with a certain amount of contempt for them, probably reflected society's general attitudes towards women at the time, but perhaps though, in Delacroix's case there was something else.

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[355] Rene Huyghe *Delacroix* (trans. from the French by Jonathan Griffin) (1963) Thames & Hudson, London, UK, p.17.
[356] Ibid, p.16.
[357] Hubert Wellington (ed.) (trans. from the French by Lucy Norton), *Painter of Passion: The Journal of Eugène Delacroix* (1995) Phaidon Press Ltd., London, p. 25.

Perhaps there was another factor involved. Probably his longstanding fascination with Medea and the circumstances of his birth, as the rumoured illegitimate son of the states-man Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, may have contributed to his ambivalence towards women because of the implication that his mother was an adulterer. This uncomfortable association of his mother with a philanderer may have made him move between the notion of woman the ornament, to woman the destroyer, and the betrayer of family values. Perhaps too he may have sometimes given way to longings for woman the soulmate. These issues are considered in the context of the visual analysis of the painting.

Visual Analysis –'Médée Furieuse' - *Medea Pursued and about to Kill her Children*

The focus is on the 1838 painting of Medea, but it is important to keep in mind that Delacroix painted four significant paintings of Medea, including one that has since been lost.

Of all the paintings Delacroix exhibited at the Salons of 1834 and 1838, only his painting of Medea came close to expressing the romantic sublime, the wild, untamed "other", the archetypal pagan in a Christian world, the woman who more than any other personifies woman as the destroyer of men. Art historian Dorothy Johnson considered Delacroix's 1838 painting of Medea to be one of the most recognised representations of her in painting.[358]

The painting depicts a formidable, larger-than-life mother figure, running into a cave with her children dangling from her arms and a dagger in her hand. In her ancient mythical role, *Medea* is an immortal, with the power of life and death, but at this moment in time, the moment of her exile, she is at her weakest and most vulnerable. She has been rejected and abandoned by everyone she knows, yet even at her weakest moment she still remains defiant:

"Let no one think of me as humble or weak or passive; let them understand I am of a different kind: dangerous to my enemies, loyal to my friends. To such a life glory belongs."[359]

The painting of *Medea* is on a canvas measuring 2.60 x 1.65m. It is on a scale that makes her tower above the viewer, while she occupies most of the surface area of the canvas.

[358] Dorothy Johnson, *David to Delacroix* (2011) University of North Carolina Press, USA, p.172.
[359] Euripdes *Medea/Hecabe/Electra/Heracles* (trans. with an introduction by Philip Vellacott) 1963 Penguin books UK page 42.

She seems to be running into a cave, with her head turned back towards the way she had come, as though checking to see who was behind her, seeking shelter from pursuers that are not visible to the onlooker. On first impressions, she appears to be a woman afraid and running for her life with her children hanging precariously from her arms, a dagger in one hand. Perhaps they hang precariously from her arms because she had gathered them up hastily, without regard for their immediate comfort, because she was snatching them from something that may represent a more atrocious fate than death at the hands of their mother.

A sliver of sunlit sky visible in the top left hand corner of the canvas places the upper half of her face in shadow, masking her eyes.The whole painting seems to exude an air of haste and fear. The sense of rapid forward movement generated by the diagonal line of her figure and the extraordinary width of her stride suggests an overwhelmingly rapid momentum.

Perhaps *Medea's* flight was still in progress and likely to continue for some time. By painting her in this undecided way, the artist intensifies the emotional impact of the painting, and imbues it with a sense of unpredictability and unreality, such as that which a distressed and persecuted person might feel. There is the precarious grasp of the children, the diagonal slant of her body on the picture plane.

One child has the knee of one leg and the foot of the other balanced on an outcrop of rock in the cave. This checks the forward momentum of the mother, and represents an intertwining of children and mother in an asymmetrical block, in a four-sided pyramid form, balanced on her forward foot. The body of the child resting a knee on the outcrop, where Medea's forward momentum stops, forms a strong horizontal plane providing a stabilising motif. Delacroix probably based the depiction of that child on the figure of the infant, John the Baptist, in Leonardo's *Madonna of the Rocks* (1483) in the Louvre[360], but he may also have based it on Correggio's Cupid in *Jupiter and Antiope* (1523) as the critic Delecluze claimed.

Delacroix may be suggesting ambivalence and ambiguity instead, rather than certainty about the fate of the children.

[360] Leonardo painted another version of *Madonna of the Rocks* twenty-three years later in 1506. This painting is in the National Gallery of London.

Delacroix's construction of an atmosphere of ambivalence in this painting begins with the part of the title that says *Medea* is "*…pursued and about to Kill her Children*". His equivocation is observable in the representation of *Medea* running, *Medea* pursued, or *Medea* about to kill her children or both. For a mother intent on murder, she also appears to be a mother tormented, afraid, out of breath, a hunted woman trying to protect her children from a bigger threat.

The spectator is puzzled about the real intention of the mother. What is the intention of the mother and what is the intention of the artist. This is what makes this painting particularly intriguing and particularly attractive because ambiguity is an important part of great art.

Ultimately, though the danger that she flees from may compel her to kill them herself rather than allow her pursuers to revenge themselves mercilessly on her children, by killing them herself. Delacroix's references, multifarious, Christian and pagan, were the outcome of his avid study of the masters in the Louvre, which he did at every opportunity, and of his large collection of prints of works when the original works were not available in France. Delacroix's painting of *Medea* is full of ambiguities and vibrating tensions.

Medea's tortured monologues reveal a woman in great emotional and psychological pain, surrounded by enemies, threatened with death and exile with no place to go and deeply conflicted over the fate of her children for whom she expresses passionate love. The question of killing her children places her in a terrible dilemma. Whether she should kill her children or flee, leaving them to someone else to kill—whether she is even capable of killing the children herself. Even in Euripides' play, there are moments when the reader could discern a kind of dilemma, in particular when Medea speaks:

> "To kill the children and then fly from Korinth; not
> Delay and so consign them to another hand
> To murder with a better will. For they must die,
> In any case; and since they must then I who gave
> Them birth will kill them. Arm yourself, my heart: the
> thing
> That you must do is fearful, yet inevitable.
> Why wait then? My accursed hand, come take the sword;
> Take it, and forward to your frontier if despair.

No cowardice, no tender memories; forget

That you once loved them, that of your body they were born.

For one short day forget your children; afterwards

Weep: though you kill them, they were your beloved sons,

Life has been cruel to me."[361]

The title Delacroix gave the painting - *Medea* pursued and about to kill her Children, allows uncertainty to enter the meaning of the title. This is in spite of the certainty expressed by the Dramaturge Oliver Taplin and John Kerrigan the author of *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon*,[362] that the dagger she holds in her hand is the weapon with which she will murder the children. Despite their certainty, there is still space for ambiguity about the possible outcome. The spaces between the words "about to kill her children" indicate this. She is about to kill her children but she is not doing it now. It appears that Taplin and Kerrigan do not consider any other possibility, but Delacroix probably does. He is familiar with the concept of mothers killing their children in order to protect them from a fate worse than death. This familiarity came not only from examples from the Greek war, but also from the background to his first painting of a monumental mother figure, the contemporary, allegorical painting, *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi* (1826).[363]

The figure of Greece stands in the aftermath of the last siege of Missolonghi, after the failed escape of the besieged inhabitants and the mass suicide by those left behind women, children and old men. Delacroix painted *Medea* twelve years later.

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The painting, received favourable critical notice. Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps (1803–1860), an early and highly regarded practitioner of landscape and Orientalist genres[364], declared *Médée Furieuse* to be the most dramatic work of modern art, understood and admired by the public. An anonymous critic writing for the Journal *L'Artiste* pronounced it to be the best work in the Salon, despite its imperfections, a caveat that often accompanied critical commentary on Delacroix's

[361] Euripdes *Medea/Hecabe/Electra/Heracles* (trans. with an introduction by Philip Vellacott) (1963) Penguin Books UK, p.55

[362] Oliver Taplin April 2014 Lorenz Eitner Lecture, *Medea's Swerving Flight Through Art and Literature* at Stanford University. John Kerrigan 1996 Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon Oxford University Press USA

[363] *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi* was followed four years later by another magnificent allegorical mother figure, *Liberty Leading the People* (July 1830)

[364] Albert Boime *Art in the Age of Counterrevolution 1815–1848: A Social History of Modern Art* Volume 3 (2004) The University of Chicago Press, USA, p.370.

paintings, and Lee Johnson wrote that even the dedicated classicist and energetic critic, Etienne-Jean Delécluze "…found qualities to admire in it."[365]

John Kerrigan writes:

> "Delacroix was familiar with the moralistic desire to find Medea repellent,"[366] adding, "In Delacroix's magnificent painting of 1838.... Medea strides into darkness. Her powerful figure is clad in scarlet and black and bared to the waist. Sprawling under her arms, protected yet threatened by a dagger, are two sons she bore to Jason. These are the children she will sacrifice to vengeance, now that Jason has abandoned her. Medea's face is turned in profile. As though in fear of pursuit, she looks back towards a sky which is the only light source on a canvas mostly sunk in the chiaroscuro of a grotto…."[367]

An anonymous critic of Delacroix's *Medea* reiterates the traditional perception of *Medea* as someone irrational and mad: "One is deeply moved by this deranged mother, with her haggard eye, pale face, dry livid mouth, palpitating flesh and burdened breasts."[368]

Dorothy Johnson[369] in '*Mythological Madness and the Feminine'* also cites the anonymous critic. Her response however is more measured turning to the psychoanalytic elements in Greek mythology about emotional states in women.[370] She explains the justifiably extreme emotional state of *Medea* in her predicament, and this accounts for the complexity and ambivalence in *Medea's* state of mind. Neither does a closer look at the painting seem to bear out the perspective of the anonymous critic. Her open mouth is not necessarily "dry and livid", instead her expression may be described as expressing fear and anxiety, not necessarily derangement.

Origins, traditions and Ambiguities – the many faces of Medea.

1. From the old Myth to Euripides' Tragedy

As already noted, Delacroix's decision to paint *Medea* seeking shelter in a cave is a departure from the story told by Euripides, so in order to understand Delacroix's decisions about his depiction of Medea, it is necessary to consider other ambiguities surrounding the story of *Medea*. One way to

[365] Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 1833–1863* (1986) Clarendon Press, Oxford, New York, p.70.
[366] John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy Aeschylus to Armageddon* (1996) Oxford University Press, New York, p.98.
[367] Ibid, p. 88.

[368] Cited in Barthelemy Jobert (1997) p.246 and in Dorothy Johnson (2011) p. 152. Both referred to "Salon de 1838," La Quotidienne, no. 70, 11 March, 1838, quoted in Sérullaz, ed., *Mémorial,* 184.
[369] Chapter 4, Dorothy Johnson, *David to Delacroix: The Rise of Romantic Mythology* (2011) University of Carolina Press, USA.
[370] Dorothy Johnson: 153.

look at it is to consider the antiquity of the story of *Medea*, her long and illustrious past, which goes back many centuries before Euripides wrote his *Medea* around the third century BCE. There are early versions of *Medea* that represent her quite differently from the familiar version of her by Euripides. She is not so violent for instance. Therefore the various interpretations of *Medea* and the ambiguities surrounding her are divided in this section into the pre – Euripides phase and the post Euripides phase.

In one old version, she does not kill her children but hides them with an elderly teacher. In another, she kills them because she wants to save them from a worse fate. In another version of the story, *Medea* hides her children one by one in the temple as each one is born, because she believed they would become immortal that way, but instead the children die. In this case, however the children's deaths were an accident not murder.

Sarah Iles Johnston, Associate Professor of Classics, Ohio State University wrote: "Medea has been of interest to everyone…from the dawn of European Literature. Although the earliest works in which she appeared are no longer intact, their fragments suggest that her story was an old and popular one by at least the eighth century BC."[371]

In the pre-Euripides period, *Medea* was a royal princess with divine connections. It is possible to trace her ancestry back to the original gods of Olympus. Her grandfather was the Sun her father was Aietes, the king of Kolchis and the owner of the Golden Fleece. Her mother was the powerful chthonic goddess Hecate, whose authority stretched over earth, sea, sky, magic, witchcraft, ghosts inhabiting cross road; the terrors of the darkness and the night. *Medea* inherited her powers and skills in witchcraft and the occult from her mother.[372]

The oldest literary version of the story of *Medea* killing her children, or more accurately, how *Medea's* children die, predates Euripides, and is found in the epic poem the Korinthiaka by the Korinthian poet Eumelos (8th–7th century BC), whom Pausanias writes about in the second century AD. The Korinthiaka is about the history of the Kings of Korinth. It tells the story of *Medea's* ultimate and legal succession to the throne of Korinth as its rightful ruler. In that version, she brings Jason with her as her husband and there he becomes king of Corinth with *Medea* as queen. The

[371] James J. Clause and Sarah Iles Johnston (eds.) *Medea Essays on Medea in Myth Literature Philosophy and Art* (1997) Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p.3.
[372] Jenny March *The Penguin Book of Classical Myths* (2008) UK page 34

relationship between *Medea* and Jason clearly had deep roots in the past.

Among surviving works, is Pindar's fourth Pythian, which had been performed thirty-one years before Euripides *Medea* in the fifth century.

In relation to Medea's murder of her brother Apsyrtos, Ruth Morse in *The Medieval Medea* argues that it was Jason and the Argonauts that killed Apsyrtos, not *Medea*. The evidence for this, according to Morse, exists in fragments of a play by Sophocles. The murder of Apsyrtos by Jason and the Argonauts was a tradition that Apollonius also adopted in his epic work.[373]

In relation to the murder of the children, a story that prefigures Euripides, says that Medea does not kill her children. The fourth century dramatist, Kalkinos wrote a play based on the imagery of the red figure volute Krater *Medea at Eleusis* made around 340–330 BCE. Kalkinos tells how *Medea* saved her children by sending them away to the care of an elderly pedagogue who lived in the Eleusinian paradise among the immortals. The Krater illustrations depict the children with the elderly pedagogue with their mother, who has also joined them there. In another version of the story of the death of the children, the Korinthians kill them in order to punish Medea for killing the king of Korinth and his daughter.

In Euripides' tragedy, *Medea* lives in a palace. She enters the palace to plead for mercy from her husband Jason, and from the king, Kreon, and to ask them to let her stay, but they are deaf to her pleas. When she realises her situation is hopeless, she takes revenge, by murdering them all within the palace. She kills the princess and the king by means of a poisoned gown that she gave as a gift to the princess, which burned her and her father to death when he tried to rescue her. *Medea* wreaks the ultimate revenge on Jason, by depriving him of a new young of a bride whose demise denies him the ability to create another family. Then by killing her own children, she eliminates Jason's heirs. The palace is the place of barbaric deeds, and it witnesses the ultimate destruction of Jason.

Most interpretations of Euripides' *Medea* represent her as a child murderer and the murderer of her brother. In Euripides' drama, she kills her brother to escape the wrath of her father and in order to escape with Jason. In Korinth she murders her children in revenge for Jason's betraying her so that he could marry princess Glauka.

[373] Ruth Morse *The Medieval Medea* (1996) D. S. Brewer Cambridge, UK, p.20.

In spite of all the horrors of her crimes *Medea* remains one of the most famous of all Greek tragedies, and Euripides' *Medea* is the best-known version. She has long captured the attention of artists, actors, writers, social scientists and musicians. *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts* listed over 190 productions of *Medea* from the thirteenth century until the 1990s. Many famous divas played the role of *Medea*, among them Maria Callas, who played *Medea* in revivals of Cherubini's opera by the same name throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1969 She also starred in the film *Medea* made by Pier Paolo Pasolini, but in this production she did not sing. Martha Graham danced *Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance* in 1946.[374]

2. After Euripides

Early depictions of the story include Apollonius of Rhodes who wrote the Argonautika in the third century. Seneca wrote his *Medea* tragedy in the first century. Ovid included her in "The Heroides", an epistolary poem in which mythical heroines write letters to their lovers or partners. Ovid also focusses on her in the seventh book of the Metamorphoses. These literary sources were the forerunners of a worldwide cultural tradition about Medea in literature, art, drama and music that continues to this day. Numerous performances of the Argonautika, over millennia, have ensured its enduring popularity.

Delacroix and his contemporaries, thoroughly educated in the classics, were familiar with both antique and contemporary sources of the story of Jason and *Medea*.[375] Their classical education made them familiar with Euripides, Ovid, and Seneca as well as modern sources, such as Pierre Corneille's *Médée Tragedy*, first performed in late 1634 or early 1635.[376] This production depicts *Medea* in a cave. Perhaps this inspired Delacroix to adopt the motif of the cave for his 1838 painting.

In the eighteenth century, there was a steady stream of performances of *Medea* as drama and as opera in France. Among these performances, there was the critically acclaimed opera, *Medea* by Luigi Cherubini performed in Paris in 1793. They did not perform Cherubini's opera during Delacroix's lifetime because the Bourbon Restoration disapproved of its connection with the

[374] Ibid, p.4.
[375] Dorothy Johnson *David to Delacroix The Rise of Romantic Mythology* (2011) , p.172.
[376] Lee Johnson, The Paintings of Eugene Delacroix: Critical Catalogue 1832–1863 (Moveable Pictures and Private Decorations) Volume III Text (1986) Oxford University Press, USA, p.80.

French Revolution and banned its performances. It was however performed again end of the nineteenth century, but this was many years after Delacroix's death.

Delacroix enjoyed the performance of the opera *Medea at* Corinth by Simon Mayr in Paris in 1823[377] He also admired his friend, Ernest Legouvé's tragedy about Medea in 1854. In fact, Legouvé's work inspired Delacroix to paint another more sympathetic version of *Medea about to Kill her Children* in 1859.

That painting showed a more troubled and hesitant Medea than the 1838 painting. In the 1859 version, she clasps her children closer to her bosom while hiding in a cave that is much darker than the cave of the original *Medea.* Unfortunately, the image of this painting is available only as a photograph, because the original painting was destroyed during World War 2.[378]

In relation to the version where she murders her children in order to save them from a fate worse than death, the theme of women killing their children in order to save them also featured in works of art about the Greek War of Independence. There were several paintings on that theme produced in France during the war. A painting by Emile de Lansac, *Episode du Siège de Missolonghi*, exhibited at the Salon of 1827, depicted a survivor of Missolonghi, with her husband and child lying dead beside her, while she prepares to kill herself in an act of martyrdom, to escape the awful fate of slavery and death at the hands of the Turks.[379] Delacroix no doubt saw this painting because it was hanging in the salon where his own massive and controversial masterpiece *The Death of Sardanapalus* also hung.

A year before his death in 1862, Delacroix received private commissions, to paint two smaller copies of his original *Medea*, This commission is another indication of the enduring public interest in Delacroix's *Medea* which continues to this day. Euripides' version of *Medea* is still the most likely choice for modern performances and the most widely known, but, it is also likely, that Delacroix's painting of *Medea* is probably the most widely recognised image of her.

[377] Dorothy Johnson *David to Delacroix The Rise of Romantic Mythology* (2011) page72.
[378] Lee Johnson, op.cit., p.149.
[379] Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer *French Images From the Greek War of Independence 1821 – 1827 Art and Politics under the Restoration* (1989) Yale University Press USA page 81.

The Cave

Medea flees into a cave. This is a departure from the traditional representation of Euripides Medea, whose drama actually unfolds in the palace. What then is the role of the cave to which *Medea* flees? Is it safe, is it shelter, does it lead to a labyrinth where she may become lost forever? In the following section, there are some possible interpretations to consider, beginning with a beguiling description of the interior of the cave.

The walls of the cave, modelled softly with a deep tonality of colour, recall the warmth of the glowing gold and brown earth tones of Leonardo's 'sfumato'. He invented this technique to create the illusion of volume in his figures, by using almost imperceptible gradations of tone from dark shadow to light. The resulting effect is both sensuous and radiant. It emphasises the delicate play of light around the mouth of the cave, which also reflects on Medea's pale, luminous skin and on the satiny tones of the children's bodies.

Delacroix's years of intense study of nature gave him the capacity to paint the subtle play of light equally well on skin tones, cave walls and the foliage of the plants growing on the floor of the cave. However, in considering the plants growing on the floor of the cave, the similarity with Leonardo's art ends.

The delicate sprays of foliage and flowers growing around the feet of the subjects in Leonardo's painting of the *Madonna of the Rocks* are not the same as plants on the floor of *Medea's* cave. In her cave the plants appears to be a mixture of benign and thorny plants, among which, the presence of thorny plants generate a sense of discomfort, suggesting these plants might be dangerous, and to watch where we step. *Medea* may be in danger or perhaps she is the harbinger of danger, we know that she possesses occult powers. There may also be other conflicting meanings associated with *Medea* in a cave. One interpretation is that she symbolises the wildness of nature, the absence of civilisation.

As a distraught and betrayed wife and mother however, she could become much more dangerous. She is like a hunted animal, desperately seeking shelter and refuge in a cave. She is hiding in a place made by nature not man, it is a place more connected to nature than civilisation. On the other hand she could be entering the cave to seek shelter and safety with her mother Hecate, who lives in the underworld and will protect her. At the same time, however, the cave also symbolises

the Byzantine tradition, which celebrates the nativity in a cave. Where, according to religious mythology the "perfect mother" the Virgin Mary gives birth to Jesus.

Leonardo's *Madonna of the* Rocks shelters in a cave, in which the Virgin, an angel and the infants Jesus and St John the Baptist, sit on delicate plants and flowers in the cool dimness. The cave is not enclosed. There is a large opening behind the figures, an open space letting in the light from behind as well as the light on their faces from the front of the painting. It is a glowing example of high Renaissance art. As an indicator of the painting's importance to him, Leonardo painted this entire picture himself. He did not delegate any part of it to his students. Now it hangs in the Louvre, designed in the tradition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, evoking the notion of natural motherhood.[380]

There is no concrete evidence that Delacroix copied this painting by Leonardo, but we do know that he often spent time in the Louvre copying the works of artists whose works hung there.

Delacroix's painting of also connects to Andrea Del Sarto's painting *Charity*. She also represents the Virgin Mary in the nurturing, protective role of wet nurse. In this painting Charity sits out of doors in a natural setting amongst the trees and flowers nurturing three children.

The structure of *Charity* forms a pyramid. The stable, broad base on the ground represents stability, solidity and piety. Delacroix admired this painting from an early age, writing in his journal, 15th April 1823:

> "…spent a long time today admiring Andrea del Sarto's *Charity.* This painting actually moves me more than Raphael's *Holy Family*. Good painting exists in many different styles. What grace, nobility and strength in his children! And the woman, what a head, and what hands! I wish I had time to make a copy. It would be a reminder that in working from nature, away from the influence of the great masters, one needs a much grander style."[381]

A cave can also be a place of perilous depths, that lead perhaps to the 'Chthonic' underworld where Medea's mother, Hecate, presides.[382] It can be a labyrinth, where one can be lost forever, and a place that harbors predatory monsters like the Minotaur. Medea sheltering in a cave and not in the house adds an air of ambiguity, uncertainty and chaos. Medea's flight seems chaotic.

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[380] Virgin of the Rocks by Leonardo da Vinci – Visual Analysis www.visual – arts-cork.com/famous-paintings/vii 9/01/2017.
[381] Hubert Wellington (ed.) *Painter of Passion: the Journal of Eugène Delacroix* (1995) Phaidon Press, London, UK, p.10.
[382] Dorothy Johnson, *David to Delacroix*, p. 172.

Her wild hair and her gown in disarray, with the red hem of her gown moving in a snake like movement around her feet. The apparent discomfort and struggles of her children creates an atmosphere of flight and fear. She is a woman in despair, seeking shelter in a cave, which perhaps, symbolises the kind of life she is destined to live in exile.

A More Complicated Ambivalence

This now brings us back to the personal life of Delacroix and raises the question whether he found parallels between his own family's tragedy and that of Medea's. Perhaps the suffering, humiliation and embarrassment he experienced in his youth, regarding rumours of his illegitimacy, and his family's experience of persecution and social rejection after the return of the Bourbons in 1815, having lost both his parents, would have been an additional source of pain for him.

He and his siblings sank into poverty when his mother died because the family lawyer had been embezzling the family fortune for years and gone undetected until the death of Delacroix's mother. The Bourbon administration dismissed His elder brother Charles, a decorated general in Napoleon's army, from the armed services on half his pension. Later, when he died and Delacroix sought to bury him with their father, he found their father's body missing and the grave desecrated.

It is plausible that an individual with Delacroix's sensitivity and imaginativeness, undergoing such disastrous experiences may have sympathised with Medea's suffering. It is possible too, that he, like other bereaved young children, may have felt a sense of responsibility for the deaths of his father, brother and mother. His great dependence, at the age of seven on his mother, who was then his sole parent after the death of his father, may have also elicited a sexual desire in him for her.

It is possible that he saw his mother as a powerful figure and hence his creation of monumental mother figures in his paintings namely *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi, Liberty Leading the People* and *Medea.*

He might have also been embarrassed by the scandal of his own birth and by implication his mother's adultery, and seen her as the destroyer of the family, yet he loved her dearly and he was,

of course a child very dependent on his mother. When she died, he may have felt she had abandoned him. A complex character like Medea might have supplied the combination of a powerful image of a mother who is both passionately loving, as well as destructive, for Delacroix to paint.

His reflections on the mortality of those around him that he loved most might have also led him to consider his own mortality given his chronic ill health

In 1838, he was forty years old. The average life expectancy at the time was around forty years for men. Delacroix, who suffered from chronic ill health since his twenties, could have felt he was living on borrowed time. One of his earliest entries in his journal confirms well-established health problems: "I generally feel unwell. I can't talk for long."[383] René Huyghe comments that his body's weakness made him seek the solitude of his work and of his journal. Delacroix wrote to his nephew in 1830: "I have been ill almost continuously, sometimes confined to bed, so that my work has suffered considerably." In 1835, he began suffering from attacks of tubercular laryngitis that further undermined his health. By 1842, his chronic bronchitis was generating a mucous laden fever that continuously irritated his bronchi and made it difficult for him to speak. He had headaches, ear infections, an almost continuous lack of a sense of wellbeing, and increasing feelings of lassitude and weakness. In a letter to George Sand in 1842 he wrote: "I am really in a sad state…. The weather is atrocious for the nerves."[384]

Perhaps his awareness of his own impending mortality may have intensified the ever-present sense of urgency that he felt about his work. By the age of forty-five he had lost all his family and some of his dearest friends had become alienated from him because of his success. "I am isolated now among these old friends!" he writes in his journal in May 1853. René Huyghe wrote: "…he only had himself to fall back on, and he could only find a reason for existence in his art… [he had to rely] …on his moral energy to drive his work to completion." His faith in himself was the only thing that kept him going "….for with very few exceptions his paintings encountered nothing but hostility and denigration. In the eyes of the public, he was the destroyer of tradition – criticisms that hurt

[383] Ibid, p.8.
[384] René Huyghe Delacroix (trans. from the French by Jonathan Griffin) (1963) Thames & Hudson, London, pp.20-21.

him deeply because he believed himself to be the true continuer and reviver."[385]

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Delacroix's *Medea* is an archetypal image of *Medea,* she is the visual image of the woman who personifies men's worst fears about women, the woman without the "mother instinct".

Oliver Taplin in his April 2014 Lorenz Eitner Lecture, *Medea's Swerving Flight Through Art and Literature* at Stanford University, described Medea as a woman who is "the very denial of the mother instinct." He describes Euripides' play as:

> "a deeply unsettling play, and its shock and challenge is especially acute, and was and is especially acute for men. It shatters the one thing that they believe that they can take totally on trust about their women, that they will cherish and protect the kids. The mother/child bond is so basic it is the mother instinct. But Medea has the mother instinct of Medea."[386]

He pursues the notion of the "core myth" a concept he created out of Euripides' tragedy and declares that "…it was Euripides' tragedy that made her name."[387]

His lecture revolves around the notion that men most fear the destructive power of women. Medea, the woman who kills her children is the woman that men fear most because she personifies their worst fears. She fills them with a great sense of vulnerability brought about by their dependence on women to provide them with heirs. This capacity to bear children gives enormous power to women and if women fail to nurture and care for the children or if women choose to kill their children, they can destroy everything men hold dear.

On the other hand, she is entirely a creation by men. Women had no part in her creation neither did they perform in the drama, until relatively recently. Euripides' *Medea* was created for men's eyes, by men so that they could come together, and as an entirely masculine body, bring themselves face to face with their worst fears. Perhaps they may have wondered amongst themselves about what might become of them if their wives, sisters, mothers and daughters suddenly and violently decided to wield such power. Underlying the demonization of the woman accused of killing the children is perhaps the knowledge that women who have always been

[385] Ibid, p. 20.
[386] From the transcription of the Lorenz Eitner Lecture on Classical Art and Culture, Stanford University, Stanford Humanities Centre Levinthal Hall, delivered by Emeritus Professor Oliver Taplin on 4 April 2014.
[387] Oliver Taplin: youtube: 4/4/2014.

constrained and controlled by men may one day break free and take revenge on men by depriving them of their future, by destroying their families.

Such a fearful depiction of women's destructive power however must require an antidote. So it is necessary to return to Oliver Taplin's concept of the "core myth – the mother instinct" to consider the kind of role this concept might have in this story. The most likely explanation for the invention of the 'mother instinct' It that it is likely to be a notion that provides comfort to men and enables them to believe that women possess a powerful drive, an irresistible instinct, that men can trust, that automatically makes them nurture, cherish and protect children.

When a woman like *Medea* appears however, (remembering that they are the ones who actually created her), a woman who kills her children out of vengeance, because her husband has betrayed her, another explanation is necessary. So perhaps they devised a way to cope with such a woman by isolating her and ascribing to her all sorts of 'unnatural' instincts and behaviours. It is therefore easier to believe that *Medea* does not possess the 'mother instinct' like other, normal women. She is not a proper woman an aberration because the 'mother instinct' in her is absent, and because of its absence, because she is 'abnormal', she is able to kill her own children, whereas a 'normal woman' would not be able to do it.

There is also another explanation. This explanation suggests that the existence of the idea of a 'mother instinct,' is probably a form of wishful-thinking because its existence is not born out by medical fact.

Women and men do kill children, their own and other children, but it is not because the 'mother instinct' or their 'father instinct' is absent. In reality, the murder of children by parents occurs when t the trials and tribulations of life overwhelm them.

A study of child murder by mothers[388] reveals that the United States, which has the highest rate of child homicide annually, around 300,000 infants and children, indicates that the most common factors contributing to the homicide of infants and children are socio-economic factors: economic disadvantage, family dysfunction, stress, violence, abuse, disability and mental illness. Women tend to be responsible for the greater number of infant deaths, while it appears that equal numbers

[388] See Hatters, Friedman, Resnick, *Child murder by mothers: patterns and prevention* in World Psychiatry 2007; 6: 137-141.

of men and women kill older children.[389]

We can see therefore, that the murder of children by a parent or parents is relatively common. It is possible to see also, that the circumstances of *Medea's* life, her husband's betrayal of her by marrying another woman, exiling her because she was a barbarian (that is, not Greek), and depriving her of her children were bad enough for her to kill her children because of the cataclysmic nature of Jason's rejection of her.

In the 431 BCE performance of Euripides' Medea, rumours circulated that the Korinthians, who in other versions of the story were responsible for the deaths of the children, bribed Euripides to shift the blame for their deaths onto Medea and away from them.[390]

In Euripides' *Medea*, her lament is about the psychological and emotional aspects of the tragedy. She has to deal with her husband betrayal and rejection, his intention to deprive her of the children, and to make her an outcast forcing her into a life of hardship and danger. In the fifth century BCE women had no autonomy or freedom. They were completely at the mercy of their husbands. *Medea's* lament below describes women's lack of control over their lives and their destinies and the injustices and uncertainties they face constantly.

> Surely of all creatures that have life and will, we women
> are the most wretched. When, for an extravagant sum,
> we have bought a husband, we must accept him as
> possessor of our body. This is to aggravate
> wrong with worse wrong. Then the great question: will the man
> we get be bad or good? For women, divorce is not
> respectable; to repel the man, not possible.
> Still more, a foreign woman, coming among new laws,
> new customs, needs the skill of magic, to find out
> what her home could not teach her, how to treat the man
> whose bed she shares. And if in this exacting toil
> we are successful, and our husband does not struggle
> under the marriage yoke, our life is enviable.
> Otherwise, death is better. If a man grows tired
> of the company at home, he can go out, and find
> a cure for tediousness. We wives are forced to look
> to one man only. And they tell us, we at home
> live free from danger, they go out to battle: fools!
> I'd rather stand three times in the front line than bear
> one child.
> But the same arguments do not apply
> to you and me. You have this city, your father's home,
> the enjoyment of your life, and your friend's company.
> "I am alone; I have no city; now my husband
> insults me. I was taken as plunder from a land
> at the earth's edge. I have no mother, brother, nor any
> of my own blood to turn to in this extremity.
> So I make one request. If I can find a way
> to work revenge on Jason for his wrongs to me,

[389] Ibid.
[390] Corinne Ondine Pache, *Baby and Child Heroes in Ancient Greece* (2004) University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, USA, pp. 10-11.

say nothing.[391]

The drama explores the lengths *Medea* is prepared to go to in order to regain her self-respect and dignity. By killing Jason's new bride, her father and his and *Medea's* children, she ensures that he loses everything. Just as she would have nothing after Jason abandoned her and taken her children away from her. This illustrates the complexity Delacroix's was able to imbue into his composition of *Medea*.

Summary

This painting is unique in Delacroix's career. It is a dramatic image of an extremely powerful woman and it resonates with tensions and ambiguities. Compared with the other monumental figures of women he created, such as *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi*, and *Liberty Leading the People*, this painting, of a flawed individual, seems to have the most power and the greatest humanity of them all. By creating this painting, perhaps he was trying to resolve the contradictions and tensions in his own mind and his life.

The visual analysis of this monumental mother figure incorporated the artist's personal dilemmas, chief of which was his ambivalence about women. His doubts about, and his mistrust of women, are strongly articulated in the following advice he gave to his nephew in 1830:

> "A woman is only a woman, always basically very like the next one.. a woman was an *objet d'art*, delightful and stimulating but – if one allowed her on to the threshold of one's heart – a disobedient and troubling kind of *objet d'art*, one that would glutinously devour a man's time and strength…."[392]

This statement to his nephew is significant. He expresses his ambivalence towards women to his nephew, as the wise uncle, that like many other mature mentors of young men, issues a warning to him not to trust women. By representing women as objet d'art, as creations, objects which he may delight in when they decorate his life but not when they trouble him with their demands, he reflects conventional attitudes to women, which often implies that women are inclined to interfere and distract men from the more important sphere of men's activities.

He stresses to his nephew that women are simply objects, creations that have little to offer. At best, they can be companions at worst they are distractions. His representation of women as objet

[391] Euripdes *Medea/Hecabe/Electra/Heracles* (trans. with an introduction by Philip Vellacott) (1963) Penguin Books, pps. 24–25.
[392] Ibid, p.16.

d'art fits with the attitudes of his time, which had very low expectations of women. Denied equal rights with men on every level, they had few options but to be ornamental, yet, as Delacroix himself observed, an objet d'art can still be distracting and troublesome.

Another approach to the painting involves the work of art as a physical creation, an object that in this case is an oil painting on canvas. Medea occupies a large canvas but she is not the only art object on canvas. The story of the bad or evil mother needs the support of the good mother to provide contrast and open up meaning, by comparing her with the Virgin Mary. She also needs to be part of a bigger narrative. She runs into the cave and looks back from where she came. Her origins are not only in the mythological world, they are also in the world of canvas and oil paint. Her predecessors are *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* (1826) and Liberty Leading the People (1830), allegories, metaphors and classic tragedy. She looks back to these previous works of art, and she runs from them yet she is one of them. She is among the new works of art of her time, despite her ancient roots, with the light from Morocco bathing her. The Moroccan light filled his brush and his mind while he was there, and when he returned he anointed his new works of art with it, painting them in the ancient Mediterranean light from which they originated.

Yet despite his creation of magnificent images of women, who have now become the archetypes of what they represent, he still seems to feel uncertain about women.

Apart from conventionally negative attitudes towards women such as those displayed in his advice to his nephew, are there perhaps other attitudes that might throw a different light on his relationships with women? What other issues might have generated his ambivalence towards women? What drew him to create such a powerful symbol as *Medea,* a symbol of the most profound threat to men.

Perhaps as suggested earlier, it is because men create images of powerful women in order to face their fears of women. This larger- than-life female figure, therefore, an invention, a mythological objet d'art from distant antiquity, exists to connect men with their lived reality, their deep fear of women. Irrespective of the fact that she is a fabrication, an invention by men, *Medea* is an idea from the distant past as a powerful destructive force, not just an ornament but an archetypal image, created within the structural framework of other archetypal images of women, the perfect mothers,

Leonardo's *Madonna of the Rocks* and Andrea del Sarto's *Charity*.

There is also the psychoanalytic perspective associated with death and bereavement caused by the abandoning father, who died, the unfaithful betraying mother who also died and the adoring son whose oedipal desires found release in the creation of *Medea*. He stripped her of her powers, had her running for her life, semi-naked into a cave that might either entrap or free her.

Her dark hair is loose and wild. Her dark red robe is stripped down to her waist, like a gown from a renaissance painting, and the ominous darkness and shadows in the cave with only a sliver of light crossing the lower part of her face and leaving the upper part in shadow. The cave where she walks barefoot has thorny herbs on the ground. Is she the good mother who has hastily gathered up her children to snatch them from danger, or is the witch running deeper into the chthonic nether regions of the cave to kill her children and return to her own mother Hecate?

The spectator is puzzled about the real intention of the mother and this leads to the next question. What is the intention of the mother and what is the intention of the artist. Perhaps this is what makes this painting particularly intriguing and attractive, because we know art loves ambiguity.

Delacroix was a master of gestural expression so he painted her as appearing to be still in progress, still in flight and still undecided. Perhaps the painting is not a completed painting, because he never resolved his feelings about his subject.

He did however paint a markedly different version of *Medea* in 1859. This painting, which is now lost, destroyed during World War 2, depicts *Medea* with a clearer face, more open and less shadowed. She still seems to look back over her shoulder but in this image, there is more light on her face than on the faces of the other *Medeas* he painted. The crown she wears is larger and more visible than in the 1838 version of the painting and she holds her children closer to her breasts.

In this painting, the dagger does not touch the children, it points vertically down onto her thigh instead. This suggests even more forcefully that Delacroix, from the moment he experienced the light of Meknes and for many years later, working on the theme of *Medea* involved confronting many different tensions, artistic, cultural, mythological and personal.

Médée Furieuse: is an ‘Objet d’art”[393] in the mind of the artist, but the designation seems to be ambivalent and the spectator is left wondering about attitude of the artist. What is object and what is art?

[393] ‘Objet’ is the French word of object, but is can also mean the focus point of an idea.

CHAPTER 7
ENTRY OF THE CRUSADERS INTO CONSTANTINOPLE – A QUESTION OF LEGITIMACY

Figure 4: *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* (1841) oil on canvas (4.10 x 4.98 m), Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Introduction

This chapter focusses on Delacroix's painting about the fourth crusade and the sack of Constantinople. It is the last of the four painting in this thesis and it represents the Byzantine period of Greek history.

In 1838, the king Louis-Philippe commissioned Eugène Delacroix to do a painting about the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade, for which Delacroix earned the considerable sum of 12,000 francs. The painting was destined for the new hall of the Crusades in the Museum of the Palace of Versailles where it hung for forty-four years. Since 1885, the painting has hung in the Louvre. A

copy of it, commissioned by Charles de Serres, took its place at Versailles.[394]

How to approach this painting, analyse it and interpret it, depends on the point of view adopted. If you were French for instance, this painting of the crusaders entering Constantinople is a celebration of a glorious moment in French history, portraying the "noble conquerors of Constantinople exploring the city on horseback and receiving pleas for clemency from the inhabitants"[395]. If you were Greek however, the painting would represent a particularly inglorious episode in the history of the Crusades, and a tragic, pivotal moment in the history of the Byzantine Empire.

In this chapter, the painting of the *Crusaders Entering Constantinople* is at the centre of the issues associated with it. These include the subject matter, the technical elements of its creation, the socio-political context, which involves Greek and French history, and the role of the crusades, all play a part in understanding this painting. The painting itself is a summary of the nineteenth century interpretation of a medieval subject as indeed were the crusades of the 11th, 12th and13th centuries.

The main issues discussed in the following pages begin with the political context in France when Delacroix painted the *Crusaders Entering Constantinople*, the history of the crusades and the issues that led to the sack of Constantinople by the fourth crusade. Following this is a technical discussion regarding Delacroix's development in colour, tone and form and the visual analysis of the painting.

Political Context in France

The Greek War of Independence ended in 1827 with the Battle of Navarino. The newly established Greek state, occupying an area less than half of the current Greek mainland, struggled to survive. After the end of the Greek war of Independence, French artists, including Delacroix moved on seeking other topics to paint. His passionate philhellenism during the 1820s, which inspired him to produce some of his most original and famous paintings, quietened down after the battle of Navarino, and he turned his mind to other ideas and to other events closer to home.

[394] Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugene Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue,* No. 274, p.96.
[395] Johnathan Riley-Smith (ed.) (1999, 2002) *The Oxford History of the Crusades* Oxford University Press, UK, p.379.

The first of those other events that captured his attention was 'The Trois Glorieuses' (the three glorious days), of the July revolution. The revolution of 1830 was started by Liberal protestors against the authoritarian and reactionary rule of the government of Charles X, the reason being, that the king had violated the Constitution. This was an accusation strong enough to force the abdication of the king. When he abdicated, Delacroix celebrated it in a final act of revolutionary fervour of his own, with the creation of his enduringly popular painting *Liberty Leading the People* in 1830.

Following the 30th of July revolution, Louis-Philippe, the Duke of Orléans, sometimes referred to as the citizen king, (*roi citoyen*) took the throne. Louis-Philippe dedicated himself to ruling according to what he called the happy medium, the (*juste milieu)*, under a new constitutional Charter, which declared the right of the nation, not the divine right of the King. Louis-Philippe became king of the French instead of king of France. Catholicism was no longer to be the 'religion of the state' but the religion 'professed by the majority'[396]

Social unrest however did not abate. Alfred Cobban comments: "it was not to be expected that France would at once settle down peacefully after the disorders of 1830".[397] Economic depression continued for another two years, there were continuing industrial disturbances and mass demonstrations, by striking silk weavers, and anticlerical agitators.

In 1834, the silk workers of Lyon went on strike for ten days protesting against the reduction of their pay. This strike failed, but it did not prevent the government from arresting the leaders, and using thousands of troops to repress the opposition. The situation deteriorated. Barricades went up, the National Guard moved in, crushed the revolution ruthlessly, and then proceeded to Massacre people in the Rue Transnonain. Honóre Daumier immortalised the slaughter of the Rue Transnonain in his famous drawing *Rue Transnonain le 15 Avril 1834*. There were many other outbreaks of unrest as well.

These included an assassination attempt on Louis-Philippe in 1835, and the outbreak of war with

[396] Alfred Cobban 1961 *A History of Modern France Volume 2: From the First Empire to the Second Empire 1799 – 1871* (1961) Penguin Books Ltd UK page 96 - 97
[397] Ibid page 99

Turkey in 1839, making the rule of Louis-Philippe fraught with unrest and uprisings, and making him increasingly autocratic. His increasingly authoritarian behaviour aggravated his subjects. They eventually overthrew him in 1848 and voted to establish the second republic. His overthrow made Louis-Philippe the last King of France.

A discussion about the complex relationship between the Byzantine Empire and the Crusaders, and the circumstances that led to their sack of Constantinople in 1204 is discussed in the footnote below.[398]

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[398] The Crusaders and the Sack of Constantinople

The sack of Constantinople was the result of various complex social and political developments that emerged during the early stages of the Byzantine Empire.

In the third century, Diocletian divided the Roman Empire equally between the Eastern and Western parts. It appeared that Rome was no longer capable of being an effective capital so he abandoned it and shifted the empire's political centre of gravity to the east.[398] Constantinople became the new capital of Rome.[398]

Over time the two parts of the Roman Empire, the East and the West, diverged culturally and politically and the gap between them grew steadily. The Eastern Roman empire that is Constantinople flourished. It had many advantages over Rome to start with. Constantinople was a wealthy well-established city with many resources and a sophisticated and well educated bureaucracy. Rome was in a more vulnerable position. There were many forces at work to threaten the Roman Empire. There were constant incursions and attacks by Germanic tribes from the north, Goths, Huns, Vandals and Franks,[398] which were appeased and held at bay, only with settlements of land, and eventual inclusion into Roman society. Many adopted Christianity. Several kingdoms established around the peripheries of Rome, in what is now France, and the Netherlands for example. They developed and ultimately flourished, especially when the Holy Roman Empire was established with the coronation of Charlemagne, in 800CE.

The experiences of the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire were therefore very different and their differences increased, resulting from very different social and political circumstances.

While the Western Roman Empire was dealing with violent barbarian tribes from the North, the Eastern Roman Empire had problems of its own.

The rise of Islam dates from 610 to 711. Moslem traders became a major force along the silk route and Islam spread through Mecca and Medina, throughout Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Spain and India. The Islamic world grew rich and powerful. There were waves of westward moving Turkish tribes coming through Anatolia and steadily occupying the hinterlands and surrounding districts, putting Byzantium under increasing pressure. the Steppe nomads, the Seljuk

and other Turkish tribes, who, having repeatedly invaded the settled regions of the Middle East, the Byzantine Empire and Russia from 600BC to 1200CE, threatened the stability and prosperity of the Byzantine Empire. Constantinople found it hard to defend its territory without extra military support so it became necessary to apply to Western Europe for help which, during the 11th century therefore, ushering in the era of the Crusades.

Pope Urban launched the First Crusade in 1095 at Clermont in France. He called it in response to an appeal for military aid from the Byzantine Emperor Alexius 1 Komnenos, eight months earlier. France was the usual site for launching crusades owing to the strong ties between France and the Papacy, making the French dominant players in the Crusades from the start.[398]

The First Crusade was a great success. They took Jerusalem, established several western kingdoms in the region and set up fortified settlements to protect their possessions in the Levant. However, these settlements required ongoing financial and military support, and as events transpired, the second and third crusades failed to meet with the kind of success that the first crusade had achieved and it became increasingly more difficult to find the money and resources to sustain these settlements.

Thomas Asbridge wrote, that when Pope Urban went on his preaching tour of France, in aid of the first crusade he called on,

> "the warriors of the Latin West to avenge a range of ghastly 'crimes' committed against Christendom by the Followers of Islam, urging them to bring aid to their eastern brethren, and to reconquer the most sacred site on earth, the city of Jerusalem…[binding] the Christian religion to a military cause." [398],

This was actually a populist statement and it did not reveal the pope's real intentions. Armed struggle against Islam was not his actual motive. Indeed his real objectives were quite different. They were to "meet the needs of the papacy ….consolidate papal empowerment….expand Rome's sphere of influence."[398]

"The crusading movement involved every country in Europe touching almost every area of life – the Church, and religious thought, politics, the economy, and society…" [398] But the third crusade was a disaster. After the enormous efforts of the crusaders, who were mostly French, sending the greatest military forces in the whole of the 12th century, they found they had achieved very little and disillusionment set in. Nevertheless, they did rally to undertake the fourth crusade.

By the time they made the decision to call the fourth crusade, ostensibly to make up for the failure of the third, things had changed, particularly in the objectives of the crusaders. the "…complex web of conflicting political motives…."[398] among European powers. According to Professor Haal,[398] influenced these change in objectives. Robert of Clari, a knight from Picardy was present when the crusaders stormed the city. He wrote about the event exclaiming: "never was there seen nor won in all recorded time so great, so noble or so rich a prize, not in the time of Alexander nor in the time of Charlemagne nor before nor

after."[399]

The Sack of Constantinople

The new Pope, Innocent III, who called the fourth crusade, had already decided that Jerusalem need not be the only objective, that Constantinople, Egypt and the French heretics were also worthy of crusader attention. Haal pointed out, that past crusaders had already raised the possibility of taking over Constantinople and making it a bastion for the faith.[398]

Nevertheless things livened up when the new pope, Pope Innocent 3rd took the throne in 1198. He issued a papal bull on 15 August 1198, calling for the faithful to undertake a Fourth Crusade to free Jerusalem, and it was to begin with an attack on Egypt, as leverage to regain Jerusalem.

His new strategy for the fourth crusade was to model it on the strategies of the successful first crusade, which had not included monarchs in the leadership. He believed the crusade should be primarily a massive Christian movement, with the objective of regaining Jerusalem. This crusade generated a lot of enthusiasm, and several fiery preachers joined the venture just as in the first crusade.

It took over a year for the count of Champagne and prominent figures from other parts of France to take the cross. They then concluded a treaty with Venice in 1201 to supply shipping to transport them to Egypt, as they intended to sail to Egypt instead of travelling overland.

The Venetians built many ships in preparation, but the number of crusading troops arriving was much smaller than expected, and the revenue raised fell short of requirements. Unable to pay the Venetians in full, the Crusader leaders considered aborting the enterprise, but then changed their minds and agreed to help the Venetians conquer the Dalmatian port of Zara instead. They also made an agreement with a Byzantine prince to help him take the throne of the Eastern Roman Empire on the condition that he supported the Crusade with large numbers of men and very large amounts of money.

The Byzantine prince in question, Alexius Angelus, had usurped the throne from his brother Isaac Angelus, blinding and imprisoning him. He agreed to pay the costs of the Venetian fleet for a year from the end of September and to retain the crusaders in his service until the beginning of March, when they intended to set sail for the Holy Land, taking with them Byzantine reinforcements.

The coronation of the young Alexius III duly took place on 1 August 1203, but then relations between the Byzantines and crusaders crumbled. Political circumstances in Constantinople changed and the usurper, Emperor Alexius III, fled. In his place, they crowned the deeply unpopular, blind Isaac Angelus. The Crusaders, now marooned outside the walls of Constantinople with all their hopes for men and money dashed, decided to take Constantinople instead.

[399] Ibid, p. 4.

Robert of Clari's wonder and amazement however, was not shared by all those that followed, and with the passage of time a sterner view gained ground. Sir Steven Runciman's comments entirely contradicted Robert of Clari: "there never was a greater crime against humanity than the fourth crusade …[its]…. effects were wholly disastrous….. It made the schism between the Latin and Orthodox churches irreparable". Others described it as "a tale of men enmeshed in the toils of their miscalculations", and that the failure of the Byzantine system of government was a major factor in the capture of Constantinople by the knights of the fourth crusade.[400]

The relationship, between the crusaders and the Byzantines was always uneasy. The crusaders were mistrustful of the Byzantines, whom they suspected of not paying sufficient dues. The Byzantines were also mistrustful of the Latins. There was popular resentment towards Rome by the Byzantines, and they rejected the notion of reunification with the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, though, the Byzantines were in a vulnerable position, ruled by a series of weak willed, ineffectual leaders. These factors therefore combined to bring Constantinople down. Geoffrey de Villehardouin, the chronicler of the fourth crusade reported the capture of Constantinople quite graphically, emphasising the great pride the crusaders felt in their achievement:

"They celebrated Palm Sunday and the Easter Day following (25th April 1204) in the joy and honour that God had bestowed upon them. And well miaht they praise our Lord, since in all the host there were no more than twenty thousand armed men, one with another, and with the help of God they had conquered four hundred thousand armed men, or more, and in the strongest city in all the world – yea, a great city – and very well fortified."[401]

The disaster of the fourth crusade aggravated sectarian hatred between the two churches. Ever since the eleventh century, tensions between the eastern and western church intensified. Such instances as the massacre of the Latins in 1182, the sacking of Thessaloniki in 1185 and finally, the 1204 sack and occupation of Constantinople, and the imposition of a Latin Patriarch poisoned their relationship and made it irreparable for centuries.

The crusaders occupied Constantinople for 61 years, during which time they continued to plunder its riches, and allowed it to fall into disrepair. In 1261, the city was recaptured "almost by

[400] Ibid.
[401] Geoffroi de Villehardouin *Memoirs or Chronicle of The Fourth Crusade and the Conquest of Constantinople* ISBN 1-4385-0723 -2 printed in the USA LVOWO31631210112 page 107

accident"[402] by Michael Paleologos of Nicaea, but too much damage had been done to Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire was mortally wounded.

It continued its decline, and by 1453, they were ripe for the picking again. This time it was Ottoman Turks and not fellow Christians took Constantinople again, and they stayed much longer, this time, over 400 years.

The Byzantine Empire, in its heyday around the sixth century BCE had ruled over territory that stretched from the Black Sea littoral to Southern Spain, The post 1261 Byzantine Empire was a mere shadow of its former self, reduced to little more than a Balkan state incorporating Thrace and north western Anatolia. It never recovered its former strength and glory.[403] With the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, an extensive and powerful Moslem Empire that lasted for over four hundred years emerged from the Turkish tribes that over the centuries had been gradually and steadily moving into Eastern Anatolia.

***Crusaders Entering Constantinople* - the painting, iconography colour and light**

When Delacroix took on the royal commission to paint the Fourth Crusade, he was already knowledgeable about classical Greek history, having had the benefit of an excellent classical education. His strongly philhellenic stance during the Greek revolution would certainly have increased his knowledge and understanding of modern Greece too. He had studied the costumes and customs of modern Greece, collecting props, garments, jewelry foot-ware, and ornamental objects, from friends and travelers, in order to paint *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios, Greece on the ruins of Messolonghi,* and other Greek subjects. Given the emphasis placed on authenticity and historical accuracy in the details of history paintings, when the time came to paint Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople, Delacroix was bound to be meticulous in his use of authentic props and would have ensured that the garments, regalia and appearances of the figures were as authentic as he could make them.

His numerous preparatory studies attest to thorough research on the topic.

Delacroix prepared many drawings and sketches for the painting and in preparation for the final

[402] Jonathan Harris Constantinople Capital of Byzantium (2007) Continuum UK page 172
[403] Paul M. Pitman 1988 Excerpt from *Turkey: A Country Study*. Library of Congress, Federal Research Division Area handbook series DA Pam 550 – 80 page 111

painting made at least three more paintings with the title *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople.* He painted one of the paintings between1839–40. It was quite small, 33 x 41 cm, and it is now in the Musée Condé in Chantilly. The final painting was large, 4.10 x 4.98 m, and now hangs in the Musée du Louvre in Paris.[404]

There is a certain tone in Delacroix's announcement to his friends of the commission he had received to paint *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*[405]*.* In a letter to his friend, Frédéric Villot he wrote "…I have got to cope with a certain Fall of Constantinople for Versailles"[406] that requires some reflection. It is not clear what he really meant by this comment. He could have just meant he had so much work that he needed an extra pair of arms[407], but it could have also meant something else. For instance, it could mean he lacked enthusiasm for the topic itself. He did not appear to be as enchanted by the commission to do a painting intended to celebrate French nationalism and hung for the Hall of the Crusaders Museum in the Palace of Versailles, as he was by the news that the ministry had commissioned him to paint the library of the Chamber.

Perhaps his enthusiasm for the painting might also have been dampened by the instruction from Cailleux, Director of the Royal Museum, "…that the king desired a picture that as far as possible 'n'eût pas l'air d'être un Delacroix,…"[408] (to be unlike a Delacroix painting). Three authoritative writers on Delacroix, Lee Johnson, Frank Anderson Trapp and Barthélémy Jobert, apparently agreed this was a credible story because of the authority of the person who reported it, Delacroix's cousin the prominent artist, Leon Reisener.

In accordance with the wishes of the King, Lee Johnson reported that Delacroix altered the design of the original sketches, "…greatly [enlarging] the scale of all the principle figures in the relation to the overall surface, tying conquerors and victims into a more flexible and cohesive unity through gesture, pose and lighting, adding mass and stability to the foreground architecture…."[409]

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[404] In 1852, he painted another version that closely followed the original painting, but it is much smaller, measuring 815 x 105 cm and also hangs in the Musée du Louvre collection.
[405]The painting was described by Timothy Wilson-Smith, the author of the introduction to the Wellington translation of the *Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, as the world-weary *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* (Wellington, 1995: xiv).
[406] Jean Stewart (ed. and trans.) *Eugène Delacroix Selected Letters 1813 – 1863* 1970 MFA publications USA page 222
[407] Delacroix then organised a new studio where he trained pupils to help him.
[408] Lee Johnson *The paintings of Eugène Delacroix A critical Catalogue 1832 – 1863 Volume III Text* 1986 Oxford University Press USA Page 97. It appears that the king had commissioned a painting from Delacroix but he did not want it to look like a Delacroix painting.
[409] Ibid.

It appears Delacroix rose to the occasion with dignity producing an outstanding work of art in spite of the humiliating nature of the royal directive. He does not write anything else about the painting, apart from the limited reference to it in his letter above.[410]

Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople (1841), exhibited in the Salon of 1841, is a very large history painting depicting the moment of entry by the victors. It was also the last monumental history painting by Delacroix on a medieval subject[411].

The description of the painting in the catalogue for the Salon of 1841 was as follows:

> "…Baudoin, Count of Flanders, commanded the French, who had assaulted the city on the land side, and an old Doge Dandalo leading the Venetians, attacked the port by ship. The principal leaders took over various quarters of the city, as families appeared weeping along the way to call for mercy."[412]

In the foreground central area of the painting are the leading crusaders wearing elaborate helmets mounted with bird forms, possibly representing family crests. The figures of the crusaders are large and prominently positioned, forming a solid yet animated pyramid. Their spirited horses prance, bearers hold tall banners that flutter in the breeze while the sunlight glints on their helmets, armour and swords giving a festive air to the parade. The long entourage of crusaders stretches back through the city, along a peninsula with brilliant blue seas on either side, and disappears into the distance.

In the foreground close to the hooves of the prancing horses, there are kneeling figures begging for mercy. A semi-naked young woman, presumably raped, sits in the lower right hand corner leaning over a supine dead or dying woman, perhaps her mother. This figure reminds us of the splendid nude that Delacroix painted, depicted on the right hand side of the canvas of the 1824 painting, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios.*

An elderly man, whose attire suggests high status, Lee Johnson suggests might be a priest,[413] is roughly man handled by a young crusader, who seems determined to drive him out in the open, away from the sanctuary of the imposing building, which may perhaps be a church. At the bottom of the steps at his feet, a woman lies dead, her jewellery ransacked, the casket that contained it

[410] At this point in time he had already abandoned his Journal for several years and did not write in it again until January 1847.
[411] Frank Anderson Trapp 1970 *The Attainment of Delacroix* Johns Hopkins Press USA page188.
[412] Ibid page 221.
[413] Lee Johnson 1986 The paintings of Eugene Delacroix a Critical Catalogue 1832 – 1863 Volume III Text Oxford University Press USA page 98

lying open on the ground near her. In front of her are two kneeling figures and a child lying on the ground in front of them. One is an elderly man with his arm around the woman beside him, hiding her face in his shoulder, while he holds his arm out to the first of the mounted crusaders advancing towards him, perhaps in supplication or perhaps to avert the anxious, swerving horses from trampling on him and his family.

In the opposite corner of the foreground are two women, one lying unconscious with her head in the lap of the woman who sits beside her, her clothes torn from her body, hanging in tatters around her naked form. Critics, including Lee Johnson, commented on the "exquisite painterly qualities of the half-naked girl"[414]. Behind them, a young woman lies on the ground, injured perhaps by the soldier behind her, who appears to be wielding a sword and attacking a woman. Captives bound to the horses, are dragged along in the parade. Yet despite the disarray of the garments worn by the vanquished, the quality of the fabrics, their textures and colours, indicate the wealth and luxury of Constantinople.

Frank Anderson Trapp draws our attention to another great painting that Delacroix did at the time, The *Justice of Trajan,* which he also painted in *(1840).* In that painting he says, Delacroix fully exploited the "…dramatic impact of looming, active human and equine shapes suddenly arrested before an imposing architectural backdrop,"[415] this comment could also apply to the '*Crusaders*'. The horses and riders also loom as equine shapes in the painting and they too appear to be arrested by the imposing architectural structure located to the right side of the canvas, the area where distressed and wounded people in the '*Crusaders'* are collected.

Delacroix's depiction of the drama of the event, the accuracy of the detail he observed in the armour, horses, and banners of the victorious crusaders, and the pathos of the vanquished, displays the power of his painting. The painting expresses his love of the exotic, of orientalism, drama, and ornamentation, features that contrast with the images of despair, resignation and death that also dominate the painting.[416]

He calls the defeated victims of the crusaders families. This brings to mind the groups of families

[414] Ibid page 99
[415] Frank Anderson Trapp 1970 The Attainment of Delacroix Johns Hopkins Press USA page 300.
[416] Ibid page 21.

he depicted seventeen years earlier, in *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*. "*Families awaiting Death or slavery*". Both these paintings, '*Chios'* and '*Crusaders*' contrast the splendour of victory with the humiliation of defeat, and both paintings express the same sense of compassion for the vanquished.

Along with the *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*, two other paintings, *a Jewish Wedding in Morocco* (1841) which he painted eight years after his return from Morocco, and *a Shipwreck* (*The Shipwreck of the Don Juan*) (1841)*,*[417] were also exhibited in the Salon. A *Jewish Wedding* received critical acclaim but not so the *Crusaders Entering Constantinople*.

There were however other important critics who did appreciate the painting, among them Charles Baudelaire, probably Delacroix's greatest fan. In his review of the Salon of 1841, Baudelaire commented that the painting was "…profoundly moving, leaving aside its subject, in its stormy and lugubrious harmony."[418] The artist himself refers to the painting as *The Fall of Constantinople,* and one of his three great massacres. Compared to Professor Johnson's neutral title, *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople,* Delacroix's *The Fall of Constantinople* is dramatically descriptive, emphasising that this is the fall of a great city, and not a glorious victory. It would seem that Delacroix dwells on the worst aspects of the sack of Constantinople. These are such things as the greed, the injustice, the self-deception and dishonesty of all the parties that culminated in a terrible outcome.

The painting, while representing a victory parade, also seems to evoke the violence and horror of the Fourth Crusade of 1204. Delacroix did something similar in 1824 in his description for the painting on the *Massacres at Chios* describing it as *families awaiting slavery or death*. Crusaders Entering Constantinople seems to be a gloomier painting, and, even taking into account the inevitable deterioration of the new oil paints Delacroix used that tended to darken with age, it is still likely that the darkness of sections of the painting were intentional. The painting seems to be cluttered, chaotic and lacking a certain vitality.

[417] These last two paintings were preferred above the *Entry of the Crusader,* at the time and the Jewish wedding in particular remains, to this day, one of his most highly regarded works.
[418] David Scott *Painting/Literature: The Impact of Delacroix on Aesthetic Theory, Art Criticism, and Poetics in Mid-Nineteenth Century France* in Beth S. Wright (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* (2010) Cambridge University Press, UK, page 180.

Take for example the rendition of the banners in this painting. They are neither vigorous nor prominent. Timothy Wilson-Smith, in his introduction to the English translation of Delacroix's journal, describes the painting as "…the world-weary *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*"[419]

The reception that Delacroix had come to expect from the critics also greeted this painting; but paradoxically, the colour, for which, in all his previous Salon exhibitions, had been consistently criticised for being too bright, now disappointed many of his critics who said that this painting lacked the brilliant coloration they had come to expect from Delacroix. [420]

An anonymous critic for *Le Constitutionnel* wrote: "We will pass over the careless drawing, the strangled and confused composition, the forced attitudes, and the usual gleams from M. Delacroix's brush, but the colour itself, so brilliant and powerful in its contrasts, has become dull and muddy. Grey tints and muddy tones have taken the place of the lively, contrasting colours of his palette, where rainbows seemed to have run. The handsome Istanbul sky is laden with heavy layers of greyish cloud that darken the entire painting."[421]

As Lee Johnson comments in response to the widespread criticism of the colouring in the painting:

> "it totally failed to take into account the fact that the climate can be extremely variable on the Bosphorus and, more importantly, to comprehend the principles of Delacroix's colour practice that it masterfully embodies. Despite the cloudy sky, perhaps even because of it, if we consider Delacroix's thoughts on overcast skies and colour, the effect of *plein air* and of real light and atmosphere seem truer in the Constantinople than in any of Delacroix's earlier salon paintings…..creating a natural impression of daylight penetrating shadow…."[422]

As anyone who has visited the city of Constantinople would know, the eastern Mediterranean tends to have a more humid climate and with humidity, cloud cover often comes, that reduces the brightness of colour.

Other critics though, who took exception because Delacroix had made this painting less colourful and brilliant than his previous paintings seemed to miss the richness and depth in his tone and

[419] Hubert Wellington (ed. Trans. Lucy Norton. Intro. Timothy Wilson-Smith) 1995 *Painter of Passion The Journal of Eugène Delacroix* Phaidon Press UK page xvi
[420] Barthélémy Jobert 1998 *Delacroix* Princeton University Press, New Jersey, USA Page 251
[421] Ibid p.25.
[422] Lee Johnson 1986 *The paintings of Eugène Delacroix A Critical Catalogue 1832 – 1863 Moveable pictures and Private Decorations Volume III Text* Oxford University Press USA page 98.

colour he achieved in this mature period of his art.

Technical matters – Colour and the "Accidental fall of light".

Delacroix's interest in colour emerged early in his painting career fanned by his early fascination with Rubens and the Venetian painters. It grew stronger when he saw the *Hay Wain* by British painter, John Constable at the Salon of 1824 where Delacroix first presented his famously controversial painting, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios,* to the public.

John Constable's *Hay Wain*, with its "luminous colour and unconventional painting techniques, inspired Delacroix to alter his painting of *Chios* and later stimulated him to go to England, [and study] John Constable and Turner's painting"[423], In 1832, Delacroix went to North Africa and this experience significantly changed his approach to colour, light and classicism.

In chapter two, there is a detailed discussion about Delacroix's first experience of the sharpness and clarity of the Mediterranean light on his visit to Morocco and Algiers in 1832. The visit is mentioned here because it represents a significant milestone in his artistic development and became the cornerstone upon which he built his mature art practice. The sojourn in North Africa stimulated his return to classicism, but on his own terms. He applied the forms and images of his personal, African classical renaissance to his decorative works and murals, and these classical murals nurtured the development of his easel painting *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*, is an important example of this phase in his art.

Art historian Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, affirmed that the *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* represented the mature phase of Delacroix's painting, and that his use of colour had reached new heights of innovation and application. She was very interested in Delacroix's methods of preparation for painting, writing a detailed description of the preparations made by one of Delacroix's students, Louis de Planet, who was making a reduced copy of *Jewish Wedding at Morocco* as a model for an engraving.[424] It is possibly safe to say that Petra Chu's reference to Delacroix's consolidation of his pictorial method and the fact that he featured "…a blond tonality

[423] Elizabeth Gilmore Holt Ed. 1966 *From the Classicists to the Impressionists: Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century A Documentary History of Art Volume III* Anchor Books USA page151
[424] Petra ten-Doesschate Chu 2001 *A Science and an Art at Once* in Beth S. Wright (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* Cambridge University Press USA p.102.

and sumptuous colour effects, an interest in relief, and the aspiration to integrate contour, colour and chiaroscuro…" apply as much to *Entry of the Crusaders…* as they do to *Jewish Wedding…*

One of Delacroix's technical innovations involved his approach to preparing the surface of the canvas. His preparations involved an initial application of a grisaille (grey semi-transparent, crosshatched paint strokes) which he then covered it with a textured impasto (thickly applied paint). However, unlike other artists, he did not scrape his impasto down to a smooth surface. He left it uneven instead, so that when he applied the next layer of paint to this deliberately uneven surface, it caused the surface of the painting to sparkle.

He was preoccupied with achieving ever more intense effects of colour and light, and he wanted to gain more understanding of the relationship between light, colour and shadow. He studied the sixteenth century Venetian painter Veronese's techniques in handling shadows[425]. In the style of Veronese, he covered a large part of this canvas with varied and muted half tones of local colour, and then applied the final coats of paint, giving the painting greater depth and richness.

Looking at Delacroix's use of light in the context of the painting Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople, it is interesting to observe his application of the phenomenon he called the 'accidental fall of light' which he believed created a natural impression of daylight penetrating shadow. This was something he noted in one of the figures in Veronese's painting Marriage at Cana. Johnson explained that Delacroix checked "the validity of this principle in nature, and noted it in an undated note, in relation to a group of workmen he had observed in Paris under an overcast sky, who seemed brightly illuminated until a ray of sunlight fell on one of them and threw the others into apparent shadow". Johnson further asserts that, "It was surely with such ideas in mind that Delacroix chose, most deliberately, to depict the entry of the crusaders under an overcast sky, largely in muted half tones, but heightened in patches of sea, city and foreground figures with 'pure accidents' of sunlight, like the labourer on the Champs-Elysées [426].

The pure accident of the fall of sunlight on the labourers of the Champs-Elysées the interaction between light, shade and colour fascinated Delacroix, with its abstract and unexpected qualities

[425] Lee Johnson 1986 *The paintings of Eugène Delacroix A Critical Catalogue 1832 – 1863 Moveable pictures and Private Decorations Volume III Text* Oxford University Press USA page 98
[426] Ibid page 98

that emerged from the play of light and shade and the dramatic contrasts evoked by the relationship between shadow and light. Once he discovered these properties of light and shade contrast, he continued to explore it in his mature painting. The painting, *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*, is an important example of his exploration of these qualities.

Delacroix implemented this way of using light and shade with powerful effect in the entry of the crusaders into Constantinople. In spite of the glamour and power of the knights entering Constantinople, what draws the eye of the viewer away from the conquerors to look at the victims is the way the light falls on them. The light seems to fall from above, but it falls around the central group of crusaders in the painting, it does not fall on them. Instead, the light seems to encircle them leaving them, and particularly their faces in shadow, making their faces almost indistinguishable.[427] The victors seem to occupy the dark centre of the painting as they cluster together in a dense pyramid form while the victims are lit up.

On the left side of the canvas, is a massive architectural feature, which is mostly in shadow, except where the light strikes it at the top. Behind the dark archway, the golden buildings of the city and the adjacent blue green sea glow in the light. As the eye follows the edge of the city back behind the leading knights in the foreground, the buildings at the edge of the sea continue to catch the light. As the eye follows the edges of the city, away from the sea, and towards the right and front of the painting, the light is less luminous. Nevertheless, a circle of light still remains around the cool darkness enveloping the crusaders, falling instead on the groups of people in a semi-circle in front of the approaching cavalry. They glow with light as they sit or stand in the path of the horses, seeming to impede the progress of Count Baldwin, while his horse nervously tries to avoid the outstretched hands of supplicating figures. Their fear and despair is almost tangible to the viewer and therefore perhaps it is tangible the horses too.

The edginess of the leading horse adds to the air of uncertainty and fear in the painting. The darkness of the clouds in the distant right hand corner of the painting, link with the shadows in the foreground and envelope the central figures seeming to gradually form a spiral around themselves,

[427] There have always been problems with the quality of colour in this painting. The colour has deteriorated and it is not easy to properly assess the original quality and character of the colour. It is a well-known fact that the paint on many of Delacroix's paintings often deteriorated due to his propensity to use modern synthetic paints that were flooding the market at the time, without having been properly tested and assessed.

perhaps symbolising an inward turning on themselves. The entourage tails off into the distance in a serpentine fashion eventually disappearing into the Golden Horn. There hovers over the painting an air of danger and chaos and the unknown.

The Behaviour of Colour

Put very simply, colour is only visible to the human eye when light is present. Without light, there is no colour. Light also changes colour, depending on the time of day and the intensity of the light. Colours in juxtaposition change each other, especially in relationship to the juxtaposition of primary and secondary colours. When a primary and secondary colour, such as red and green or yellow and purple or blue and orange are juxtaposed the intensify each other. If we look intently at two juxtaposed colours at the place where they meet, the eye experiences a dazzling effect.

Finally, there is the effect of the accidental fall of light. This occurs when light breaks through in one area but leaves the rest in shadow. This causes the sunlit object to become very bright and it has the effect of darkening the adjacent unlit objects.

Delacroix employed all these behaviours of colour and light in his painting. He used the broken colour placed in small strokes on the surface of the canvas to achieve blends and tones that he learned from Constable. He used the vividness of simultaneous contrast to add dazzle and intensity, and he used strong contrasts between shadow and light to add depth and drama.

The Moroccan experience of 1832, first transformed Delacroix's palette. In her *Documentary History of Art Volume III*, Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, (editor), her observations reinforce the impact on Delacroix of his contact with Islamic culture and the brilliant Mediterranean light. "Delacroix was freed further from the colour conventions of Europe and introduced to the colour harmonies of Islamic culture by a journey to Morocco in 1832. In the bright light there, the laws of complementary colour could be observed and studied….."[428]

Holt added "From Eugene Chevreul, then director of the dye laboratories at the Gobelin Tapestry Factory, Delacroix learned to intensify colour by dividing it into its components,"[429] This was a

[428] Elizabeth Gilmore Holt (ed.) 1966 *From the Classicists to the Impressionists: Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century A Documentary History of Art Volume III* Anchor Books USA page151
[429] Ibid page 151

technique Delacroix also observed in the work of the English landscape painter John Constable. This technique involved breaking up colour into its component parts. For example, instead of mixing colours on the pallet to get secondary colours, such as pinks, greens, greys, colour is applied separately in small strokes of primary colours, placed adjacent to each other leaving it the eye of spectator, which, at a certain distance is able to combine the adjacent colours to achieve blended colours.

Holt describes Chevreul's achievements in the field of colour theory. He had an illustrious career, appointed as a young man to the Gobelin tapestry factory to head the dye laboratories and then became professor of organic chemistry at the Museum of Natural History. He studied the various qualities of natural colour and went on to formulate his research as the law of complementary colours or the law of simultaneous contrast. He "provided the scientific foundation for Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist painting."[430]

In relation to Delacroix, Lee Johnson writes:

> "Another important aspect of the colour in the *Constantinople* is that here for the first time there is conclusive evidence of Delacroix's scientifically calculating complementary contrasts with a colour circle: on a sheet of studies for the picture…, he draws a faint colour circle, writing the three primary colours and their complements on the circumference and connects each primary to its complementary with a diameter. In the final picture, in addition to complementary contrasts in some of the costumes, three of the standards borne high by the crusaders display the primary contrasts, as though blazoning the principle: yellow and violet, blue and orange, red and green. Though the colours on Delacroix's quickly sketched circle, are not in the same position as on Chevruel's colour circle[431], and chromatic circles existed before 1839, it seems most probable that Delacroix's interest in and experimentation with complementary contrasts at this period derives from Chevruel's book published in Paris in 1839. "[432]

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, even before the death of Delacroix, the impressionists, post-impressionists, and pointillists, exploited these techniques of colour and light to the full. Many also painted in the open to capture the best of the light for their work and inspired by Delacroix, these artists transformed European art forever.

[430] Ibid page 327
[431] Lee Johnson 1986: pages 98 - 99
[432] Ibid, pages. 98–99.

A Question of Legitimacy

In this section, the discussion focusses on issues of legitimacy, which had been briefly touched on earlier in this chapter. Proposed here, are three narratives concerning issues of legitimacy.

One issue involves the unauthorised sack of Constantinople by the knights of the Fourth Crusade. The next concerns the story of Constantine the Great's triumphant entry into Rome after his victory at the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312. At that battle, he usurped the imperial crown by fighting and killing both his rivals, thus destroying the rule of the Empire by a Tetrarchy, which Diocletian had set up for the management of the Roman Empire. Constantine murdered his rivals and thus establishing a dictatorship with himself as Emperor in its place.

The third narrative concerns King Louis-Philippe, as a descendant of the House of Orléan. The legitimists disputed his accession to the French throne after the abdication of the Bourbon king Charles X, because they believed the French throne belonged to the Bourbon Dynasty. [433] They regarded Louis-Philippe as a usurper when he came to the throne after the July Revolution of 1830.

The king's motivation for commissioning the painting in 1838, therefore, was associated with the objections of the legitimists, who questioned his right to occupy the throne because he came from the Orleon and not the Bourbon family. Louis-Philippe decided to strengthen his claim to the throne. He did this by referring to issues of national pride. One of these was areas of historical national pride was associated with the prominent role France played in the Crusades of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries so he transformed the palace of Versailles into the *Salle De Croisades* (Museum of French history) which he inaugurated in 1837. There he collected painted, sculpted, drawn and engraved images illustrating events and individuals significant to this aspect of French history. He also ordered three paintings from Delacroix for the museum: the *Portrait of Tourville* (1835), the *Battle of Taillebourg* (1837) and the *Crusaders* Entering Constantinople (1841).[434]

In addition, he also established the Gallerie des Batailles at Versailles. This Gallery displayed images of notable scenes about French military history. This gallery and the collection it contained

[433] Alfred Cobban A history of Modern France Volume 2: From the First Empire to the Second Empire 1799 – 1871 1961 Penguin Books UK page 126
[434] Ibid, p.367.

was established as a way of differentiating himself from the unpopular Bourbons, "…construct[ing] a triumphalist historical narrative by selectively displaying scenes of notable French military. history"[435]

Todd Porterfield described three interlocking strategies for achieving this kind of purpose. See footnote below.

Louis-Philippe employed all these strategies in seeking to raise his status in the eyes of the French population. He decided to use art because he had before him many brilliant examples of successful propaganda in the past, although, as René Huyghe pointed out, of King Louis-Philippe that he had little feeling "for art in general" and that "he crassly regarded it (art) as a servant of history."[436] Therefore, he did not stray far from the policies established by the Bourbon restoration and prior to that, Napoleon and the Directory, who used art to assert their legitimacy as monarchs or rulers. He, like his predecessors, needed to alter public perceptions and representations of reality and history in order for them to accept him as a legitimate monarch. Artists were therefore vital for the purposes of reinterpreting reality and casting a favourable light on the king.

Throughout the Revolution, and the Directory, the Republic and the Napoleonic Empire, art played a central role in the glorification of the leaders and the reinterpretation of history. From Jacques-Louis David's neoclassical masterpieces: *the Oath of the Horatii* (1784), *the Death of Socrates* (1787) the *Lictors bring to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons* (1789) and many others celebrating loyalty to the state and the sacrifice of the individual for the social good. Or the celebration of

[435] Albert Boime 2004: 294.
[436] René Huyghe Delacroix 1963: 368.

> "…historical models, moral contrast and authenticating rhetoric… to both legitimise the existence of the July monarchy, divorce it from the Bourbon Restoration in the minds of the people; and to gain their support for the expanding colonial venture of the nineteenth century [by] …the invocation of historical memories that make the French heirs to the ancient Egyptians, conquering Romans, or crusading Christians…," and inculcate notions of French superiority in science, morality, masculinity and intellectual rigour against the decadent traits such as fanaticism, cruelty, idleness, vice, irrationality and deviance of the Easterners. Where the artists come in of course is to carry out the task of authentication by producing naturalistic pictures representing what would be regarded as historical records and eye witness accounts of the desired perception of history.[436]

Napoleon's greatness by Baron Gros, *Bonaparte Visits the Plague stricken of Jaffa* (1804) and Ingres, *Napoleon on his Imperial throne* (1806), to name a few. They provided the French public and the art world brilliant and inspiring moral tales. The Bourbon Restoration simply appropriated the success and power of neo-classical art to support their claims to legitimacy and greatness.

Artist's glorification of political figures inspired by the rise of French nationalism, the revival of Greek mythology, and medieval nostalgia enabled artists to produce magnificent paintings. Nostalgic references to the middle ages were of particular interest among French families, who actively sought familial connections to the crusaders. Proof of connection with crusaders meant that their family coat-of-arms could be displayed in the Salles des Croisades. French families competed fiercely with each other for this honour. Some families even resorting to forged charters.[437] The rise of nationalism, the interest in the medieval past and the search for ethnic roots were part of a widespread and deep desire to claim a legitimate connection with the distant past in order to strengthen their claims to belong where they lived.

Peter Paul Rubens and Delacroix's *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*

A close study of the painting, the *Crusaders Entering Constantinople,* led to a new discovery. It concerns the striking structural similarity in the composition of an oil sketch by Peter Paul Rubens, for a tapestry depicting the *Triumphant Entry of Constantine into Rome,* and the composition of Eugène Delacroix's painting, *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople.*

It appears that Delacroix based the composition of his painting *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* on the structure of an oil sketch for a tapestry designed by Rubens around 1622, entitled the *Triumphant Entry of Constantine into Rome.*

The Oil Sketches and Tapestries

Delacroix was preoccupied with the fragility and potential demise of civilisation, and this painting is a fitting example of the thing he fears most, the destruction of an ancient and brilliant civilisation, in this case, the destruction of the Byzantine Empire, it appears the painting represents a eulogy on

[437] Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Oxford History of the Crusades* (2002) Oxford University Press, UK, p.371.

the destruction of Medieval Greek civilisation.

The term ‘entry’ in this context means the occupation and possession of a place by conquest and it applies to other ‘entries’ that usually apply to the triumphal entries of the victors to a city they have captured.

‘Entries’ relevant to this chapter also include the *Triumphal entry of Constantine into Rome,* an entry that ushered Christianity into the Greco-Roman world and, centuries later, the *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*, ushered in the Latin empire in the east, with its mission to destroy eastern Orthodoxy and to replace it with Roman Catholicism. Another ‘entry’ into Constantinople took place in 1453 when the Ottoman Turks captured and occupied Constantinople. This came closest to fulfilling Delacroix’s fear of the destruction of civilisation. The occupation of Greece by the Ottoman’s symbolically, and to some extent actually, destroyed the source of Western civilisation. Another entry that comes to mind after the series of entries above is the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Multitudes of people carrying palm fronds and laying them under the feet of the donkey celebrate his modest entry. This entry, unlike the others celebrating the entry of conquerors, symbolises torture, not celebration.

The *Triumphant Entry of Constantine into Rome* is one of twelve tapestries on the life of Constantine the Great by Rubens and Pietro da Cortona. There were full-scale cartoons in watercolour on paper made from these oil sketches for the weavers to follow when making the tapestry. The weavers were located in the tapestry manufactory of Marc Comans and François de la Planche in Paris, later to become the Gobelin factory.

Correspondence between Rubens, François de la Planche and Marc de Comans, both co-directors of the Saint-Marcel shop in Paris, indicated that the Saint-Marcel shop ordered the tapestry designs. Rubens produced the series of oil sketches around 1622.

There was an exhibition entitled *Drawn by the Brush: Oil Sketches by Peter Paul Rubens* held in the Cincinatti Art Museum from June to September 2005 for which Margaret Weiseman wrote the Catalogue. She described the reaction of Louis XIII’s inspectors asked to assess the merits of the work. They were so impressed they wrote to Rubens commending him on his “profound knowledge of antique costumes and the exactitude with which [he] rendered [them]”. Weiseman describes the

"shallow relief-like presentation of the *Triumphant Entry*", stating that Rubens "consciously echoed the static format of antique triumphal processions such as the *Triumphal Entry of the Victorious General* on the Arch of Constantine in Rome." She suggests that the figures in the triumphal procession depicted on the Arch of Constantine, inspired the figures of Constantine and of the two kneeling men in the background of the scene.

This seems to link in with Delacroix's painting of the *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople. ,* This also contains a motif like that of the two kneeling men, modified in his case so that one of the two figures is a blind man kneeling with one hand outstretched towards Count Baldwin of Flanders' horse while his other arm is draped around the shoulders of a woman kneeling with him.

The *Triumphant Entry of Constantine into Rome* depicts Constantine the Great on horseback, approaching the entrance to the city with one hand raised in greeting. Immediately in front of him is the personification of the goddess Roma, Patroness of Rome, or possibly Athena (Minerva) the goddess of wisdom and of just battles.

Wearing a helmet and a short sword, she is hurrying away from the archway with a statuette of Victory in one hand and indicating two priests with the other, or perhaps they are pagan priests that she is pushing away. Above Constantine, Fame, with the trumpet of truth in her mouth, having removed from her mouth the trumpet spreading falsehood[438] which she points towards the pagans at the far side of the painting, heralds his claim to legitimacy.

The genius of Victory holds a laurel wreath above his head, upon which a jewelled diadem is visible. A Lictor on foot beside the horses, bears the fasces, symbolizing Constantine's authority, and behind him waves the imperial banner, inscribed with the Greek symbol for Christ. Under the hooves of the horses are the broken columns of Greek antiquity as a metaphor for paganism defeated by Christianity. Such myth making about Constantine who, as the first Christian Emperor: "…wrought the change in status of Christianity from a persecuted religion to one which rode in triumph…"[439] was already endemic during his lifetime. Rubens, who was devoutly religious,

[438] Julius S.Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens: A Critical Catalogue Volumes 1 and 2* (1980) Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, p.76.
[439] David Dubon, Tapestries from the Samuel H Kress Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the History of Constantine the Great Designed by Peter Paul Rubens (1964) published by the Phaidon Press for the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, p. 33.

contributed to the process of strengthening Christianity's claims to legitimacy with his art in the footsteps of another great artist.

The parallels between the Rubens' oil sketch for the tapestry of the *Triumphant Entry of Constantine into Rome* and Delacroix's *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* is striking.

Reproductions of these images by Rubens were widely available as prints. Delacroix was an avid collector of prints and a great admirer of Rubens, so it is probably safe to assume that could have seen the prints of Rubens' designs. The strong similarities in the pictorial structure of *Delacroix's Crusaders Entering Constantinople* and Rubens' oil sketch, add weight to the hypothesis that the oil sketch was the basis for the structure of Delacroix's painting. It is also possible to assume that the connection in subject matter of the two works, victors taking possession of the spoils of war. Is a relevant link

As discussed earlier, the authority Constantine called on to justify his seizure of Rome was the 'miracle' at the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312. The Byzantine scholar, Speros Vryonis described the widely held belief of the miracle said to have occurred at the start of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge: "…Anxious over the issue of the conflict with Maxentius, Constantine was satisfied that the Christian god had indicated His support in the approaching struggle. The appearance of the cross in the heavens with the legend 'In this shalt thou conquer', and the vision in which Christ instructed Constantine to manufacture the labarum, instilled Constantine with a confidence in Christ's support which later seemed to him justified by the results."[440] The justification being that he believed he had usurped the throne from Maxentius and organised his death with divine approval.[441] In the case of the knights of the Fourth Crusade, they believed that God endorsed Catholicism, and that Orthodoxy was a heresy.

The discovery of the series of Ruben's Oil sketches depicting a series of events in the life of Constantine the Great and finding among them the image of *The Triumphal Entry of Constantine into Rome* highlights Delacroix's artistic and philosophical debt to Rubens, and his devotion to

[440] Speros Vryonis Jr. *Byzantium and Europe* (1967) Thames & Hudson, UK, p.24.

great European works of art as his main source of inspiration. It is an important indicator, that Delacroix used the work of other artists, adopting elements of the structure and style of the work as well as the meanings associated with each work in his own paintings.

Delacroix's *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople,* based on Ruben's *Triumphal Entry of Constantine into Rome,* draws together two pivotal events in Greek history. The first event, *Constantine's Entry into Rome* in the fourth century, heralds the beginning of a Greek resurgence in politics and culture. The *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* eight centuries later heralds the decline of Greek society and culture. These two great works of art by two of the greatest European artists of all time, Rubens and Delacroix on a theme associated with the history of the Greeks, provide another representation of the fate of the Greeks and their rise and fall throughout history.

These events and others discussed in this thesis record the history of the Greeks as episodes of destruction and regeneration. Delacroix himself believed in the ultimate destruction of civilisation and the fate of Greece during his lifetime confirmed his dark philosophy.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* is the last painting in the group of four paintings studied in this thesis. Chapter 7, which is dedicated to this painting, depicts the capture and sack of Constantinople in 1204, and refers to the subsequent establishment of the Latin empire, which lasted until 1261. It represents the end of the Byzantine Empire and, symbolically, the end of western civilisation, which came in 1453, with the occupation of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks.

<u>The Three Great Massacres</u>

In this summary, it is necessary to introduce Delacroix's three great massacres of which this painting is the last of the trilogy. They represent major crimes of war and peace and they are a group of paintings particularly important to Delacroix. They comprise *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios – Greek Families Awaiting Slavery or Death* (1824). *The Death of Sardanapalus*, and

Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople."[442]

Delacroix called *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* his first 'great massacre. Art historian Francis Haskell, in his presentation to *Chios A Conference at the Homereion in Chios* (1984), counted this painting in the same league as other great anti-war paintings, such as Franscico Goya's series of prints entitled *The Disasters of War* (1810–1820), *The Third of May 1808* (1814), and Picasso's *Guernica* (1937).[443]

Delacroix's second 'great massacre', *The Death of Sardanapalus* painted in 1827, was based on a poem by Lord Byron. It depicts the suicide of the ancient king Sardanapalus with all his concubines, slaves, servants, horses and treasures. Delacroix positioned the king in the upper centre of the painting lying on his luxurious bed. He appears detached as he watches the violent execution of his people and his animals, and unmoved by the terrified struggles of his concubines and horses, that were being slaughtered before his eyes. Sardanapalus, wrote Diodorus Siculas[444], one of Delacroix's sources for this painting "…built an enormous pyre in his palace, heaped upon it all his gold and silver […] and consigned [his concubines and eunuchs] and himself and his palace to the flames."[445] Sardanapalus did this because his situation was hopeless. Rather than allow his rebellious subjects, who had besieged him to destroy him, he chose to destroy himself and everything he held dear in an act of defiance.

The painting caused a great controversy, it "…provoked more hostility from critics and state officials and even from his friends, than any other painting he had done up to this time. He was sensitive to its defects but nevertheless he …." regarded it as one of his best paintings.[446] History has proved him right. *The Death of Sardanapalus* has become an archetypal example of orientalism.

Delacroix mused on the end of civilisation while he painted the *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*. At the time, he was also painting the library of the *Palais Bourbon* and the library

[442] The other two paintings that make up the three massacres are *The Massacres at Chios (1824)* and *The Death of Sardanapalus (1827).*
[443] F. Haskell 'Chios The Massacres and Delacroix' in John Boardman and C. E. Vaphopoulou-Richardson (eds. (1986) *Chios A Conference at the Homereion in Chios* Oxford University Press USA pages 335 - 358
[444] Diodorus Siculus, the Library of History Vol 1, 2.1 – 34 penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/home.html
[445] Ibid
[446] Lee Johnson 1981: 116.

of the *Palais du Luxembourge* using images symbolic of Greco-Roman mythology and culture. The images he used from these sources were the *'objet d'art"* of a Greco-Roman civilisation that no longer existed except in the mythologies, records, memories, stories and other remnants of the '*objet d'art' of* Greece and Rome. Perhaps the end of civilisation is always like that. Eventually it exists only in memories and in fragments. However, from these fragments, much can be salvaged and much learned about how civilisations are destroyed and how the can be restored.

In relation to the artist's personality, there is an aspect of it that tends to hovers over his work. There is a sense of ambiguity that comes into play that refers to his relationship with violence. He portrays extreme violence in most of his paintings, yet he never loses sight of his own humanity and this pervades his art.

His humanity and his subject matter are connected. He paints suffering and injustice but he does it with luminous colour. This is probably the result of his lifelong search to depict light and colour as naturally as possible. He finally succeeded in this goal after he returned from North Africa and studied the colour wheel, Chevreul's law of simultaneous contrast and the observation of the effect of the accidental fall of light on a group of work-men on the Champs Elysee. This observation revealed to him the important relationship between shadow and light observed together.

Delacroix's ambivalence and his preoccupation with careful observations of the behavior of light and shade seems the key to his capacity to create images that speak to the lives and suffering of many people. With the *Crusaders entering Constantinople*, he allowed this painting to speak for itself. The contrasting light and shadow at play over the figures seemingly in random ways allows the observer's mind to move over the bridge Delacroix built with his art, between the artist and the observer.

CHAPTER 8
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis investigates the European perspective on Greek history and culture from the mid eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century. Europeans, having imbibed a classical education, saw Greek history and culture through the lens of ancient Roman history and culture. They then found their long held perception of classical Greece changing in the late eighteenth century and Europeans, influenced by the Greek revolution of 1821 – 27 and the archaeological findings in Greece, took a new view of both ancient Greek society and culture and the state of Modern Greece as it emerged during the early nineteenth century.

The transformations in Greek society and culture occurred during this period had two kinds of effects on French art. They influenced both the classicists and the romantics, heralding the ideological division polarizing artists, also reflecting the ideological division in French politics.

In the course of the research for this thesis, it became clear that no other author had investigated this particular group of works together, making the study unique.

Four paintings namely: *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios, Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi, Medea*, and *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*, created by French painter Eugène Delacroix were chosen for their subject matter, which was drawn from episodes that marked pivotal moments in Greek history. These episodes include Classical Greece, the Byzantine Empire, and the 1821 – 1827 revolution to gain freedom from centuries of Ottoman occupation. The study of these paintings illuminated a fascinating and complex set of interrelationships between historical events, ideological debates, and transformations in visual art and illuminated by the depth and originality of Delacroix's art.

Each painting encapsulates a specific phase in the artist's professional development, signifying a pivotal moment in current French society. At the same time, the four paintings together signify a unique approach to the history of the Greeks by representing pivotal moments in the history of the Greeks through the art of Eugene Delacroix.

Delacroix spent his entire life living with political and social instability and violence. Some conflicts, such as the Greek War of Independence and the French revolution of July 30th, had his support, and inspired him to produce some of his most famous paintings including the four works central to this thesis.

The Parisian art world of the 1820s split politically and aesthetically, and Delacroix found himself at the centre of the division very early in his career. Named the leading romantic after Théodore Géricault's early death in 1824, and described as the Victor Hugo of painting, he responded with the assertion that he was purely classical, '"je suis pur classique"'[447]. He struggled with labels such as 'romantic and classical', and the struggle was evident in his early paintings. The first two paintings, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* and *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* are primarily about Greece's re-emergence from centuries of oblivion under Turkish rule.

The first painting, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, which Delacroix painted in response to atrocities committed by Turkish troops on the island of Chios, caused consternation in the Academy, which vehemently rejected it because it was a romantic/orientalist painting. It was also the height of the international Grecian revival (the Neo-classical revival) in art and architecture approximately (1750 – 1850).

Conclusion

Delacroix's life mirrored his art. Unique, tormented, original and socially ambiguous. He was evidently an aristocrat but he was also illegitimate, he strove for conformity and to be at the centre of society but was somewhat marginalised, and his work despised by the conservatives, the very social group he strove to be accepted among.

His work was not properly valued until the new generation of artists who succeeded him and to his kind of notoriety after his death, the Impressionists, elevated him to the status of a great artist.

This thesis set out to examine Delacroix's perceptions of Greece through his art in the four paintings at the centre of this thesis and the outcomes associated with each painting.

[447] George P. *Mras Eugène Delacroix's Theory of Art* (1966) Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p. 5.

- 1824 - *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* - a massive work of art that drew intense ire and criticism from the mainstream. It is a flawed but arresting work now the archetypal painting of the Greek revolution. When he did this painting, Delacroix launched into colourism and orientalism. He became the principal colourist of that period, the early nineteenth century and the creator of several landmark orientalism masterpieces.
- *1826 - Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi.* A monumental mother figure in a darkly classical colour setting was his image of defeat, a monument to the death of Byron and a tribute to the heroism of the Greeks.
- 1838 - *Medea Pursued and About to kill her Children.* Another monumental mother figure that represented his grief over his mother and his ambivalence about her. By this time, he had moved away from his youthful passions for extreme violence and looked to the classics for balance and renewal
- 1840 - *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* – With this painting Delacroix reached the pinnacle of his exploration of colour. He also turned back quite deliberately to a more classical approach to his art. When he painted the *Crusaders entering Constantinople* he also returned to Rubens, and based this painting on a Rubens oil sketch of the *Triumphal Entry of Constantine into Rome*. Not since he painted his first serious work for the salon in 1822, *The Barque of Dante* did he make such an explicit reference to Rubens in his later paintings.

Neo-classicism dominated the French art world, which eagerly followed the progress of the Greek revolution, full of dreams about the rebirth of classical Greece. They adopted philhellenism in great numbers and Delacroix's painting of *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* is now an archetypal image of the Greek war of independence and a profound example of romanticism. For Delacroix at the time the strongly negative reception of the painting was a very painful experience. He battled with the label of romantic, with the result that the next painting in this group, *Greece on the Ruins of Messolonghi* was markedly 'classical', with its shallow depth of field, the classical form of Greece, and his cool palette. In spite of a producing a more classicising painting he did not apply

the precision of line and attention to the smallest detail required by neo-classicism. He used strong tonal relationships and expressive brushwork reminiscent of Peter Paul Rubens, rather than the glazed colours in style of Raphael. Nevertheless, the critics treated Greece more favourably this time.

Delacroix fervently protected his independence of mind and thought in relation to his art. He believed it was imperative that his own imagination and personal experience were central to the way he communicated his ideas and impressions in his art and he remained firmly focussed on his own vision of art and on his role as an artist. Eventually in 1854 nine, years before his death, he admitted to Théophile Silvestre, an influential writer and art critic at the time, that he had been a romantic since the age of fifteen, provided it meant the "free manifestation" of his "personal impressions" and was free of "academic recipes."[448] Delacroix's late admission, that under these conditions, he may have been a romantic all his life, explains the ambiguity in his paintings, seemingly both classical and romantic.

The realisation that he could not conform did cause Delacroix some anguish because he did not want to be an outsider. He was concerned with social acceptance, but he also had a strong desire to excel in his art, and he never wavered from exploring his own vision. These two impulses, the desire for mainstream acceptance and his individuality, were lifelong tensions within him.

His struggles with style and colour reached a peak after the Greek war of independence ended. His ambivalence was most evident in the *Médée Furieuse (Medea pursued and about to Kill her Children*) (1838), set in the classical period of antiquity. There is a veil of ambiguity over the painting. Will she kill her children or not?

Delacroix became increasingly preoccupied with bleak musings on the breakdown of civilisation. These thoughts were prominent in his thinking while he painted two important public commissions. The Library of the Palais Bourbon, seat of the Chamber of Deputies (1838 – 47) and the library of the Palais du Luxembourg seat of the chamber of Peers (1840 – 46). Michèle Hannoosh, art historian and Delacroix authority suggests that Delacroix's preoccupation with the nature of

[448] Lee Johnson, *Delacroix Masters and Movements* (1963) Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, UK, p.5.

civilisation, its fragility, contingency and vulnerability," [449] involved memories of his own lonely adolescence as an orphan, and of the "sense of personal fragility that pierced through the meditative detachment of his journal."[450]

Rubens – *Entry of Constantine into Rome*

Among the four paintings, perhaps The *Crusaders entering Constantinople* represents a highpoint in Delacroix's mature easel painting. His unique use of compositional structure and colour based on his discovery of the relationship between shade and light created by the accidental fall of light, made him and his work the link between early and late modernism in European painting. Delacroix's contribution to the history of art was the result of his intense lifelong struggle to define his own meaning of art, philosophically, aesthetically, intellectually and technically. He struggled with classicism and romanticism, aware that in reality he was neither one nor the other.

Finally, by closely studying the four paintings we could conclude that the tensions and ambiguities were the underlying forces, which played a part in shaping these works. These tensions – classicism versus romanticism are historical interpretations of contemporary and past events.

The interplay of light, which was always important for artists, through Delacroix's research and experimentation moved painting to a new level, where light became the central element. In particular, Delacroix's serendipitous observation of 'the accidental fall of light' on the workers on the Champs-Elysée was probably the significant moment that confirmed Delacroix in the role of the bridge in European art history between the past and the future and the progenitor of the impressionist movement.

Was Delacroix the romantic, the classicist or the avant-garde of a new era in Western art? It depended on which painting we consider, because ultimately, Delacroix was the illegitimate child of all of these isms.

Yet he himself was simply striving to be unique, to be exceptional. In the end, this is why he said 'I am just classical'.

[449] Michèle Hannoosh 2013 '*Delacroix and the end of Civilisation'* in Delacroix and the Matter of Finish/Eik Kahng, with essays by Marc Gotlieb, Michèle Hannoosh Santa Barbara Musem of Art page 77
[450] Ibid page 79

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APPENDIX

List of Figures

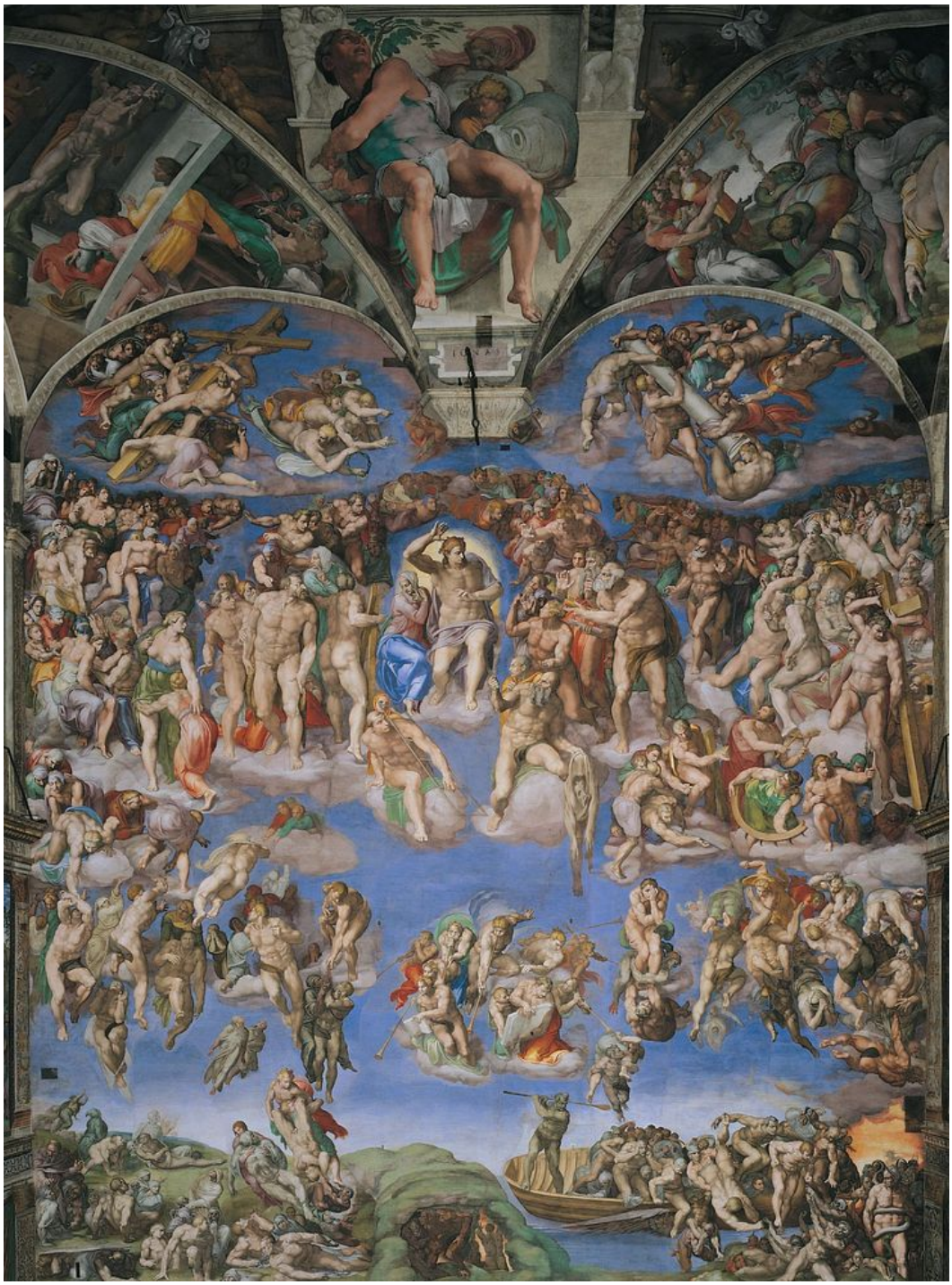

Figure 1 Michelangelo The Sistine Chapel *The Last Judgement* 1535 – 1541 fresco

Figure 2 Jean Antoine Watteau 1717 *Embarkation for Kythera* oil on canvas 129 194 cm Louvre Paris France.

Figure 3 Jacques-Louis David 1784 *Oath of the Horatii* oil on canvas 3.26 x.4.2 m Louvre Paris France

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Figure 4 Jacques-Louis David 1787 *Death of Socrates* oil on canvas 129.5 x 196.2 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art New York

Figure 5 Jacques-Louis David 1789 *The Lictors Bring to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons* oil on canvas 323 x 422 Louvre

Figure 6 Jacques-Louis David 1781 *Belisarius Begging for Alms* oil on canvas 288 x 312 Palais de Beaux-Arts Lille

Figure 7 Joseph-Marie Vien 1763 *The Seller of Cupids* oil on canvas 770 x 600 cm Musée National du Fontainbleau

Figure 8 Théodore Géricault 1818 – 1819 the Raft of the Medusa oil on canvas 4.91 x 7.16 m Louvre Paris

Figure 9 Jean-August-Dominique Ingres 1824 The Vows of Louis XIII oil on canvas 421 x 262 cm Montauban Cathedral

Figure 10 Eugene Delacroix 1827 *The Death of Sardanapalus* oil on canvas 3.92 x 4.96 m Louvre Paris

Figure 11 Eugène Delacroix 1834 *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* oil on canvas 180 x 229 cm Louvre Paris

Figure 12 Eugène Delacroix 1841 *A Jewish Wedding in Morocco* oil on Canvas 140 x 105 Louvre Paris

Figure 13 Delacroix the barque of Dante

Figure 14 Delacroix Liberty leading the People

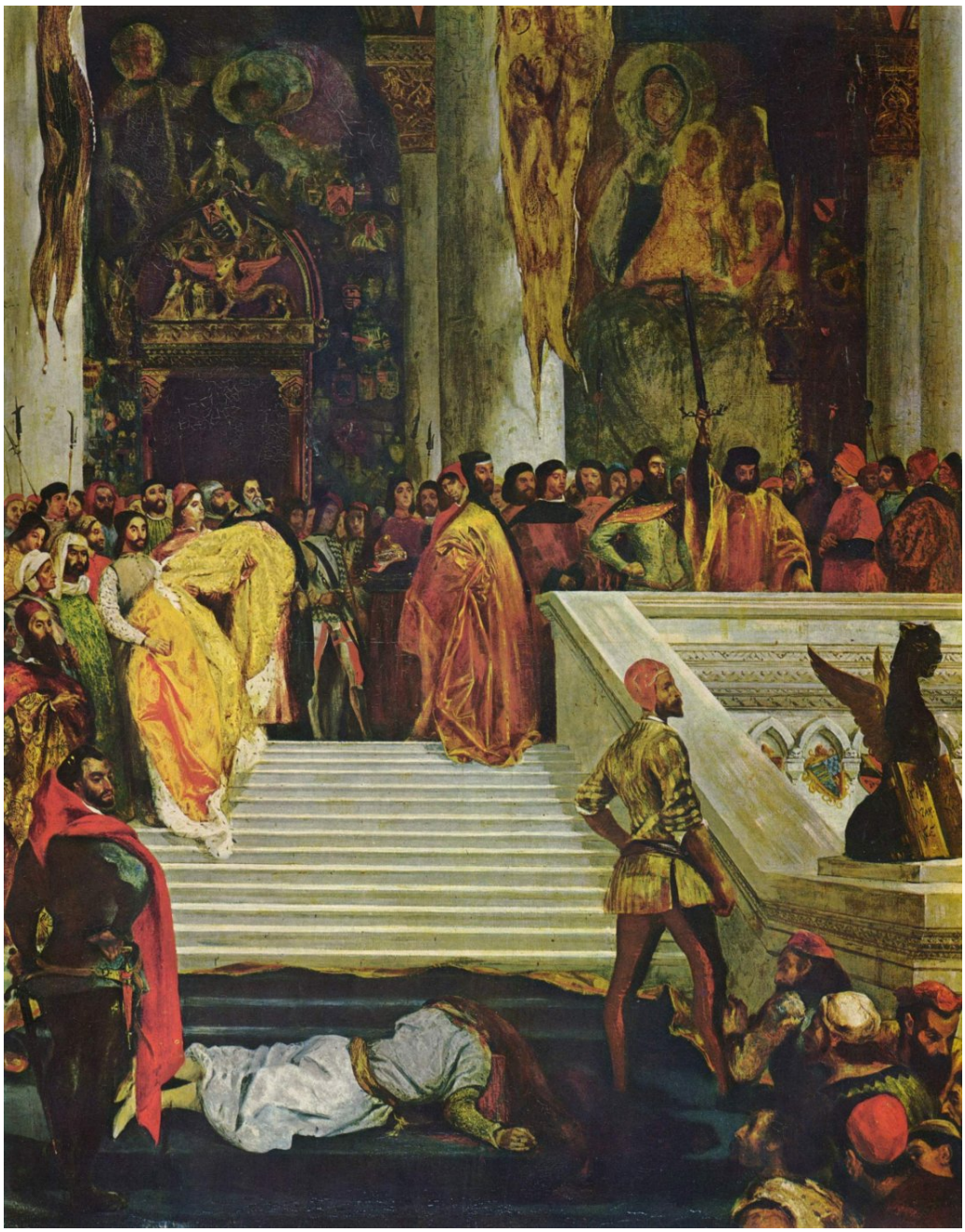

Figure 15 Delacroix the Execution of the Doge Marino Faliero

Figure 16 Delacroix Girl seated in a Cemetery

Figure 17 Ingres Death of Leonardo

Figure 18 David Leonidas and Thermopoli

Figure 19 Delacroix Still life with Lobsters

Figure 20 Sebastien Bourdon Lamentation over the Dead body of Christ

Figure 21 Leonardo Madonna of the Rocks 1483–1486. Oil on wood transferred to canvas, (189.5 x 120 cm) Louvre, Paris

Figure 22 Andrea del Sarto Charity 1518. Oil on wood transferred to canvas (1.85 x 1.37 cm), Louvre, Paris

Figure 23 Honore Daumier Rue Transnonain

Figure 24 Rubens Entry of Constantine …

Figure 25 Crusaders Entry in Constantinople