

British Art during the Late Georgian Period

Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Nineteenth Century European Art*
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Rome was the cradle of Neoclassicism; Germany provided the movement's theoreticians; and France, in the person of David, produced its greatest painter; but Britain was undoubtedly the economic engine that powered this change in direction. The countless British gentlemen who visited Italy on their Grand Tours injected a healthy stream of guineas into the Roman art economy. Many of the wealthier ones were avid collectors of original antiquities as well as of copies and casts. They bought paintings and prints of Rome, and had their portraits painted against a backdrop of Roman ruins or surrounded by famous antiquities (see *The Grand Tour*, page 51).

Georgian Britain was among the wealthiest nations in eighteenth-century Europe (see *Georgian Britain*, page 74). The country prospered in spite of the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence, thanks in large part to the Industrial Revolution. Yet, while British landowners and merchants spent lavish sums in Italy, there was little public support for British art. Individuals might commission works privately—mostly painted portraits and sculpted busts, or an occasional funeral monument—but officially the British Parliament gave scant support to history paintings and public monuments on a larger scale. This set Britain apart from France, where the government was an important patron of the arts (first through the Office of Buildings,

Gardens, Arts, Academies, and Royal Manufactories of the King and, after the French Revolution, through various republican government agencies). The lack of government support was not compensated for by church art commissions. Following the massive destruction of religious art under Henry VIII (ruled 1509–47) and then the Puritans, the Anglican Church did not pursue the tradition of church art. (By contrast, the Roman Catholic Church had an aggressive program of artistic commissions during the same period.) As a consequence, monumental art patronage in Britain was restricted to the monarch, a handful of aristocrats, and some individual members of the clergy.

The scarcity of official patronage caused British artists to find other avenues to make art, and particularly history painting, profitable. These strategies, outlined below, explain in part why British art of the eighteenth century was different from French art, and from European art in general. Other reasons for this difference—and, as we shall see, they are not unrelated—are the British preoccupation with the “sublime” and the fascination with the cultural heritage of the Middle Ages.

The Sublime

While the quest for ideal beauty was an important driving force in art during the latter part of the eighteenth century, there was also, especially in Britain, a fascination

John Singleton Copley, *The Death of the Earl of Chatham*,
1779–81. (Detail of FIG. 3-19.)

Georgian Britain

While France in the eighteenth century was ruled by kings named Louis, Britain was the land of the Georges (George I, 1714–27; George II, 1727–60; George III, 1760–1820; George IV, 1820–30). Unlike the French monarchs, who had absolute authority, the British kings, since 1688, had shared their power with Parliament, following a complex formula that was imbedded in British law. For much of the eighteenth century the most powerful man in Britain was the Prime Minister. Sir Robert Walpole (in office 1721–42) and William Pitt the Younger (in office 1783–1801 and 1804–6) each played a

crucial role in determining Britain's internal and foreign policies. In the forty years that separated their ministries, Pitt's father, the 1st Earl of Chatham, though never officially Prime Minister, served as "virtual" Prime Minister from 1756 to 1761 and again from 1766 to 1768.

The relation between British kings and prime ministers is aptly visualized in a caricature of 1792 (FIG. 3.1-1) in which Pitt the Younger rides on the shoulders of George III as they go to battle against seditious writings.



3.1-1 **Richard Newton**, *A Bugaboo!!!* 1792. Caricature published by the printseller William Holland. British Museum, London.

with the sublime. This term, which today refers loosely to something wonderful, in the eighteenth century had a quite specific meaning that could be traced back to antiquity. Ever since Roman times, philosophers and artists had realized that visual—and, indeed, all sensual—experience cannot be neatly divided into "beautiful" and "ugly." Certain aesthetic experiences deeply affect the viewer without necessarily being beautiful. For these, a Roman philosopher of the first century CE known as Longinus (his true identity is unknown) coined the term "sublime." This was revived in the eighteenth century, when the word was cogently defined and elaborated by the British politician and philosopher Edmund Burke (1729–1797).

In his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1757, Burke observed that the most powerful human emotions are evoked not by the experience of beauty, but rather by the sensation of pain or fear, or both. These emotions are, in reality, unpleasant, but when experienced from a "safe distance,"

pain and fear can be thrilling (as when one watches a raging fire), or, as Burke called it, "sublime." Sublime experiences, he wrote, produce a "delightful horror," distinct from the emotion inspired by beauty, which he defined as "love, or some passion similar to it."

Burke described sublime experiences at length, touching upon encounters with darkness, power, emptiness, vastness, difficulty, magnificence, and suddenness. He also cited specific examples of the sublime from nature, literature, and art. To Burke, starry nights, thundering waterfalls, raging storms, and roaring animals were all sublime. But so were John Milton's description of Satan in *Paradise Lost* (1667), and the ancient monument of Stonehenge, "those huge rude masses of stone, set on end, and piled each on other."

Although Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* contains no advice for the artists of his time, his treatise had a considerable impact on the contemporary art world. It encouraged a new role for art, a role that was neither to entertain pleas-

antly (like Rococo art) nor to moralize, educate, and edify (like much of Neoclassical art). Art, instead, should release a flood of emotions in the viewer. Unlike the theoreticians of the beautiful (Winckelmann, Mengs, Reynolds), who said that the seeds of beauty were planted in Classical art, Burke did not restrict evidence of the sublime to any single period in history. He maintained that the sublime could be found in nature as well as in the art and literature of various periods.

The Lure of the Middle Ages

The preoccupation with the sublime may be loosely related to a renewed interest in the Middle Ages that occurred alongside the Classical revival in Britain from about 1750 onwards. In the eighteenth century the Middle Ages were perceived as a dark, mysterious era of primeval forests and haunted castles. While Classical art seemed to reflect beauty and order, the Middle Ages suggested sublimity and confusion. This is not to say that everything medieval was sublime, or that the sublime was exclusively confined to the Middle Ages. On the contrary, sublimity could be found in the crumbling ruins of Classical buildings and in the history and legends of Greece and Rome. By the same token, much that was medieval was quaint or grotesque and had nothing at all to do with the sublime.

The interest in the Middle Ages was closely related to the desire of northern Europeans in the late eighteenth century to affirm their cultural roots. Unlike Classical

culture, which originated on Mediterranean shores, medieval culture was seen as a typically northern European phenomenon, a mixture of the traditions of the region's original inhabitants, the Celts, with those of the Germanic tribes who had invaded their territory at the beginning of the Christian era. The appearance, in the 1760s, of two long epic poems, titled *Fingal* and *Temora*, caused great excitement in Britain and the rest of northern Europe. These poems, apparently discovered and published in modern translation by the Scottish poet James Macpherson (1736–1796), were said to have been written in the third century CE by the ancient Gaelic bard, Ossian. They were hailed as the northern counterpart to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. For just as Homer's works were seen as the fountainhead of Classical civilization (see page 58), so Ossian's poems were celebrated as the source of medieval culture, and, by extension, of northern European culture as a whole. It matters little that, in the nineteenth century, scholars established that Macpherson's discovery had been a hoax and that he had written most of the two poems himself. By that time, their important role in the revival of interest in Britain's origins had already been played out.

Horace Walpole, William Beckford, and the Taste for the "Gothick" in Architecture

One of the foremost exponents of all things medieval was Horace Walpole (1717–1797), the youngest son of Britain's well-known first Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. In 1747 he bought a country house at Twickenham, near

3-1 Strawberry Hill. Remodeled for Horace Walpole by Richard Bentley, John Chute, Robert Adam, James Essex, Thomas Pitt, and others, 1753–76. Twickenham, Middlesex.





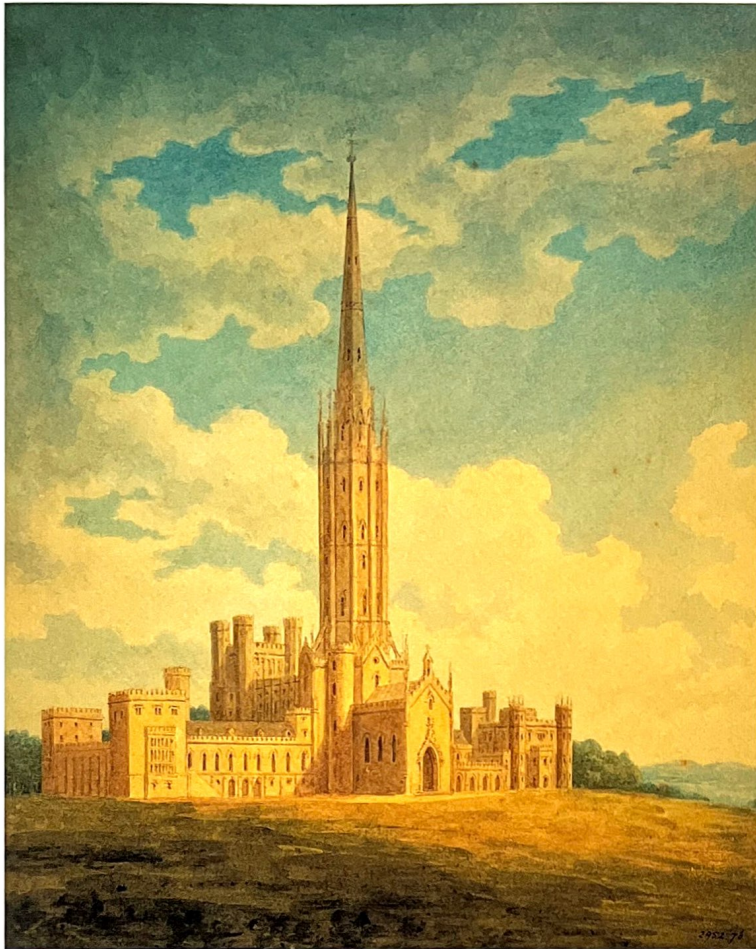
3-2 **Thomas Pitt and John Chute**, Gallery over the Cloisters, Strawberry Hill, 1759–62. Twickenham, Middlesex.

London, which he subsequently transformed into a medieval fantasy called Strawberry Hill (FIG. 3-1). To the exterior he added turrets, battlements, and variously shaped medieval-style windows, deliberately striving for an irregular and asymmetrical effect. The interior was remodeled with stucco ceilings and wall paneling inspired by the late Gothic Perpendicular style (FIG. 3-2). Although Walpole employed several architects to help design and remodel his home, the ideas were mostly his own. He was adamant that the details of both exterior and interior decorations should be copied after existing medieval monuments.

At first glance, the interiors of Strawberry Hill seem far removed from the Classically inspired rooms designed by the Adam brothers (see FIG. 2-30). Both, however, were informed by their owners' desire to "live in the past" and to create a space that invited those inside it to meditate on history and the passing of time. Just as in the Etruscan Dressing Room in Osterley Park House various details were copied from Classical originals, so the interiors of Strawberry Hill were inspired by Gothic tombs and altar screens. Moreover, both interiors contained original period pieces (Classical pieces, acquired through excavations in Italy, and medieval pieces, removed from medieval British buildings) which lent them an air of authenticity.

Strawberry Hill became widely known in the late eighteenth century because Walpole published a lengthy description of the house in 1774 and again, in expanded form, in 1784. Through these and other writings, Walpole hoped to promote a "Gothick" fashion in architecture, that is, a building style eclectically inspired by medieval art. Although Gothick architecture could be sublime (see page 73), Walpole's emphasis was rather on the fanciful and on what soon would come to be called the "picturesque" (see page 182).

While his writings about Strawberry Hill were primarily aimed at the British gentry, Walpole stimulated a popular fascination with the medieval period through his creation of the so-called Gothick novel, part mystery and part horror story, set in the Middle Ages. It is noteworthy that, applied to literature, the term "Gothick" referred not merely to a form of medievalism but also to the fantastic, the ghastly, and the grotesque. Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, published in 1765, initiated and exemplified the Gothick literary genre. The novel is dark, stormy, and supernatural in flavor—a head-on assault on the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Although unsuccessful when first published, *The Castle of Otranto* eventually became a popular success and was endlessly imitated, both by hack writers and by better-known authors such as Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823). It set the prece-



3-3 **Charles Wild**, *Fonthill Abbey*, c.1799. Watercolor on paper, 11½ x 9¼" (29.2 x 23.4 cm). Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

dent for Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and the fantastic tales of Edgar Allan Poe (1840s), all of which led ultimately to the modern horror story.

Walpole's most extravagant follower among the next generation of British gentlemen was William Beckford (1760–1844). Orphaned at the age of nine, Beckford inherited a fabulous fortune, which enabled him to realize his every whim. His most outrageous project was the refurbishment of his father's estate, Fonthill Splendens, in Wiltshire, southern England. After building a 6-mile (9.65 km) wall around the property, Beckford converted a garden building into a monastery and erected a central medieval tower that would eventually measure more than 250 ft (76.2 m). Meanwhile, he demolished the old country house and moved into the monastery, renaming the property Fonthill Abbey (FIG. 3-3). As a home, Fonthill Abbey (1796–1807) was a total failure since it was, practically speaking, uninhabitable. As a realization of a Gothick fantasy, however, it was without equal. Its tower and monastery were awe-inspiring in size, epitomizing the sublime as it had been defined by Burke. Fonthill Abbey came to a fittingly dramatic end when its tower collapsed in 1825, two years after Beckford sold the property. The ruined tower quickly became a tourist attraction, reminding visitors of the transience of power and wealth.

The Sublime and the Gothick in Painting: Benjamin West

The quest for the beautiful and the fascination with the sublime were by no means incompatible with the taste for the Classical and the Gothick. Many artists were as much preoccupied with one as with the other. Thus Benjamin West, who painted *Agrippina Landing at Brindisium with the Ashes of Germanicus* (see FIG. 2-11), that early paradigm of Neoclassicism, also produced *The Cave of Despair* (FIG. 3-4), a painting that epitomizes Gothick taste. While *Agrippina* is based on Classical history, *The Cave of Despair* illustrates an episode from *The Faerie Queene*, a lengthy epic poem by the Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser. The painting depicts a critical moment in the poem when the valiant "Red Cross Knight" enters the cave of "Despair," represented as a despondent old man, to commit suicide. As he is about to thrust a dagger into his throat, the beautiful Una appears and restrains him.

In *The Cave of Despair*, confusion and frenzy have replaced the order and calm of *Agrippina*. With its medieval subject, dark cave, corpse, skeleton, and ghosts, the painting calls to mind the Gothick novels of Walpole and Radcliffe. While *Agrippina* inspires admiration and love, feelings that categorize the painting as "beautiful," *The Cave*



3-4 Benjamin West, *The Cave of Despair*, 1776. Oil on canvas, 24 x 30" (61 x 76 cm). Duxbury Art Complex, Massachusetts.

of *Despair* instills in the viewer a sense of dread and anxiety that compels one to call it "sublime."

It is difficult to understand how *Agrippina* and *The Cave of Despair* could have been painted by the same artist, especially since they were executed only four years apart. Nonetheless, they have some aspects in common. Like *Agrippina*, *The Cave of Despair* teaches a moral lesson, even though this is overshadowed by its chaotic composition. The painting can be read as an allegory in which the Red Cross Knight represents man's valiant struggle to do what is right, while the old man personifies the despair to which everybody, at times, succumbs. Una, finally, stands for Truth or, alternatively, Religion, both of which can save man from himself and set him back on the proper course.

In addition, both *Agrippina* and *The Cave of Despair* contain numerous eclectic elements borrowed from the art of the past. While *Agrippina* draws on Roman relief sculpture and Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican Palace, *The Cave of Despair* is reminiscent of the works of Rembrandt

van Rijn (1606–1669) and Salvator Rosa (1615–1673). Clearly, West, like most artists of his generation, followed the advice of Reynolds to study not merely Classical and Renaissance art but all art of the past. For, as Reynolds said in his *Discourses*: "In every school, whether Venetian, French, or Dutch, he [the artist] will find, either ingenious compositions, extraordinary effects, some peculiar expressions, or some mechanical excellence well worthy of his attention, and, in some measure, of his imitation."

West's fascination with the Gothick and the sublime continued to the end of his career. As an artist who was keen on self-promotion and the marketing of his work, he took a great interest in public taste. West must have come to the realization that the Gothick, because of the thrill it provided, had greater public appeal than the Classical, and that the sublime, by arousing strong emotions in the viewer, was ultimately more powerful than the beautiful.

Consequently, during the last ten years of his life, West created a series of colossal paintings that epitomized the

sublime in both size and subject matter. The most impressive of these was *Death on the Pale Horse* (FIG. 3-5), a huge canvas measuring some 14½ feet by 25 feet. Inspired by the Apocalypse or Book of Revelation, the final book of the New Testament, the painting presents an image of St John's gruesome vision of the end of the world: "behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death. And Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with beasts of the earth."

Death on the Pale Horse was not a commissioned work, intended for some special location. As we have seen, commissions from state or church were rare occurrences in Britain. And West could hardly have anticipated that an individual would buy such a gigantic canvas. How then did he expect to make money from this work, which took many months to complete?

West was counting on a new commercial strategy that he used successfully during the later part of his life. *Death on the Pale Horse* was exhibited by itself, in a building on the busy London street of Pall Mall, where its huge size, sensational subject, and sublime nature attracted many viewers. Visitors were charged an entrance fee, much as if they were going to see a movie. Thus the income that West earned from the painting did not come from its sale, but exclusively from the "box office."

West's initiative was more than a clever entrepreneurial strategy. For one thing, he put a price on spectatorship, shifting the monetary value of a work of art from the possession

of the actual object to its psychological effect on the viewer. For another, he took the power to judge art away from a small elite group of artists and critics, and put it directly into the hands of the general public. Thus he promoted a movement towards the democratization of art that would become increasingly powerful in the nineteenth century.

Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery

The idea of producing paintings for exhibition rather than sale was not West's own, neither was it a new idea in 1817, when *Death on the Pale Horse* was first shown. Some thirty years earlier, in 1789, the English engraver and print-seller John Boydell (1719–1804) had opened a special gallery, also in Pall Mall, where for a fee the public could admire a selection of paintings by different artists on subjects taken from Shakespeare's plays.

The idea for the Shakespeare Gallery had first come up at a dinner party attended by several artists, who bemoaned the fact that there was no market for history painting in Britain. Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery was a response to this complaint, but it was also a commercial venture. Boydell planned to make money both from the entrance fees and from the sale of engravings reproducing the paintings in the gallery. He would also market a new illustrated edition of Shakespeare's plays. The choice of themes was carefully calculated to appeal to the ongoing popularity of Shakespeare as well as to the taste for the medieval and

3-5 **Benjamin West**, *Death on the Pale Horse*, 1817. Oil on canvas, 14'8" x 25'1" (4.47 x 7.65 m). Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.



the sublime. Many of Shakespeare's plays are, of course, set in the Middle Ages. What is more, eighteenth-century critics saw in such tragedies as *Macbeth* and *King Lear* exemplary models of the literary sublime.

Among the artists who participated in Boydell's project were several who had shown an earlier interest in the sublime. Benjamin West contributed two paintings, including *King Lear in the Storm* (now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston) and *Ophelia before the King and Queen* (in the Cincinnati Museum of Art). The Irish painter James Barry (1741–1806), a close friend of Burke, contributed two paintings as well, one of which was *King Lear Weeping over the Body of Cordelia* (FIG. 3-6), an outstanding example of the sublime in painting. Barry's work shows the final scene of *King Lear*, when the old king has discovered that his youngest daughter has been hanged. Mad with grief, Lear emerges from a tent carrying the body of Cordelia. His despair is echoed by nature as a thunderstorm breaks loose, causing sudden darkness and a strong wind that sweeps up Lear's long white hair and beard.

In the eighteenth century Shakespeare's play was known to be based on a legend about an ancient pre-Christian British warrior king. Barry has emphasized the primeval

British character of the play by depicting Stonehenge, the prehistoric monument with all its sublime flavor, in the background. Realizing that Stonehenge would have been new at the time of the tale, Barry has painted a "restored" version, probably copied from one of the many archaeological treatises about Stonehenge that had appeared in Britain in the eighteenth century.

Henry Fuseli

The most important contributor to Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery was Henry Fuseli (1741–1825). Born Johann Heinrich Füssli, in Zürich, Switzerland, he began his career as a Protestant minister. This may explain his lifelong interest in theology, philosophy, and literature, which would inform his art in later times. During a trip to Britain, Fuseli met Joshua Reynolds, who convinced him to become a painter. After an eight-year trip to Italy, he settled down in London to become one of Britain's best-known artists at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Fuseli owed his initial reputation to a very unusual painting exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition of

3-6 **James Barry**, *King Lear Weeping over the Body of Cordelia*, 1774. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50" (1.02 x 1.28 m). Tate Britain, London.





3-7 **Henry Fuseli**, *The Nightmare*, 1781. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50" (1.02 x 1.27 m). Detroit Institute of Arts.

1781. *The Nightmare* (FIG. 3-7) was so successful that Fuseli repeated it in a number of different versions, at the request of eager collectors. The version here shown represents a young girl, dressed in a long white gown, asleep on a bed. Her uncomfortable position appears to be causing a bad dream, represented by a *mara* (a monstrous creature believed to cause nightmares), seated on her lower abdomen. A white horse, perhaps also symbolizing the nightmare, enters the room through a parted curtain behind the bed. Both *mara* and horse evoke the fear the girl experiences in her sleep, in the absence of a wakeful, rational mind. Fuseli's painting operates halfway between Gothick thrill and sublime terror, as it both repulses and strangely fascinates the viewer. Anticipating by more than a century the ideas of Sigmund Freud (who, incidentally, had a reproduction of *The Nightmare* hanging in his study), Fuseli has forged an immediate link between dreaming and sexuality. *The Nightmare* hints at the young virgin's repressed desire for, as well as fear of, sexuality. One may see the ugly monster as a dream symbol of male

libido and the white horse bursting through the parted curtain as a symbol of the sexual act itself.

The Nightmare brought Fuseli instant renown. This, in addition to the positive reaction to some Shakespeare paintings that he had submitted to the Royal Academy, secured him a commission for eight paintings for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery. Some, such as *The Witches Appearing to Macbeth and Banquo* (FIG. 3-8), now only known through Boydell's print of the painting, are obvious examples of the sublime. Others, however, show something new and different—an interest in fanciful imagery that, at times, seems to anticipate twentieth-century Surrealism. Like Fuseli's *Nightmare*, these paintings seem related to dreams; but instead of representing the dream "from the outside," they seem to draw inspiration from within.

Of these works, executed between 1785 and 1790, the best-known is *Titania and Bottom* (FIG. 3-9), which represents a scene from Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Jealous Oberon, king of the fairies, has quarreled with his wife Titania. While she is asleep, he casts a spell on her to



3-8 **Henry Fuseli**, *The Witches Appearing to Macbeth and Banquo*. Stipple engraving on paper by James Caldwell, 1798. 17½ x 23¼" (44.5 x 59.9 cm). Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.

make her fall in love with the first person she sees upon awakening. That person turns out to be Bottom, an amateur actor from a nearby village who is wearing a donkey head. In the painting, we see the beautiful Titania cuddling Bottom, while her retinue of fairies looks on in amusement. Fuseli has let his imagination run wild in depicting the fairies and their odd-looking attendants. One fairy holds a bearded scholar on a leash; another holds a miniature muscle man on her lap. Fascinating and a little scary, these figures—like Shakespeare's play itself—are evocative of a dream. *Titania and Bottom* occupies an important place in British painting since it gave rise to a typically British genre, generally referred to as "fairy painting" (see page 329).

Although Fuseli's contributions to the Shakespeare Gallery earned him a solid reputation as well as membership of the Royal Academy, his financial rewards were minimal. Fuseli was paid 280 guineas for *Titania and Bottom*, while the engraver who made the reproduction of the painting received 350 guineas. The sense that he had been cheated by Boydell led Fuseli to embark on a scheme of his own, the so-called Milton Gallery. By producing all the paintings himself and

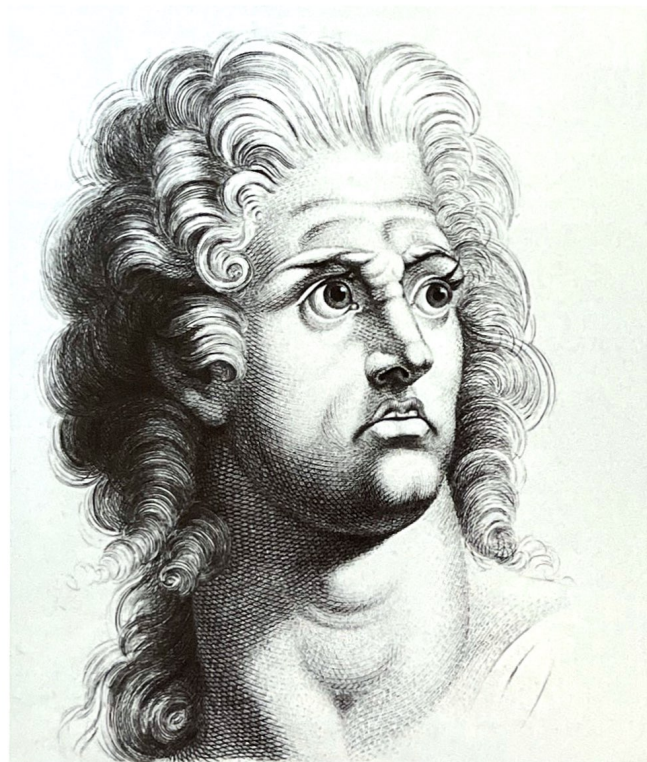
3-9 **Henry Fuseli**, *Titania and Bottom*, 1790. Oil on canvas, 7'1" x 9' (2.16 x 2.74 m). Tate Britain, London.





3-10 **Henry Fuseli**, *Satan and Death, Separated by Sin*, 1776. Oil on canvas, 25 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 22" (65 x 57 cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

3-11 **Henry Fuseli**, *Satan*. Illustration in Kaspar Lavater, *Essays in Physiognomy* (vol. ii, opposite p. 285), 1779. Engraving by Thomas Holloway, 5 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 4" (14.7 x 11.5 cm). British Museum, London.



controlling the exhibition and the sale of reproductive prints, he hoped to turn a healthy profit.

In 1799 and again in 1800 Fuseli rented a gallery on Pall Mall and showed forty paintings on themes derived from *Paradise Lost*, the masterpiece of the seventeenth-century poet John Milton. The choice of author was no doubt carefully considered. Milton, in the eighteenth century, was as widely read and revered as Shakespeare. Burke himself had singled out Milton's *Paradise Lost*, especially his description of Satan, as the height of the literary sublime.

Satan and Death, Separated by Sin (FIG. 3-10) is a reduced copy by Fuseli of one of his monumental paintings for the Milton Gallery. It is a spectacular composition in which Satan, the Fallen Angel, raises his spear against the ghastly figure of Death but is held back by Sin, a frightening half-woman, half-snake figure. Fuseli's notion of Satan as a young male with curly locks and large eyes is one that he had conceived some fifteen years earlier as an illustration for a book by his friend Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801). In his four-volume *Physiognomische Fragmente* (Essays on Physiognomy), published in 1779–8, this Swiss theologian had introduced a new field of scientific study called physiognomy, which investigated the relationships between facial features and character (see *Physiognomy and Phrenology*, page 248). Fuseli's image of Satan (FIG. 3-11) combines several features that Lavater associated with the choleric or angry temperament, such as abundant, curly hair, wide open eyes, and prominent eyebrows.

Fuseli anticipated that his Milton Gallery would draw huge crowds and, hopefully, attract buyers. But the turnout was disappointing. Although he sold a few paintings, most were returned to his studio and eventually got lost. Even the sale of prints reproducing the paintings was sluggish and did not compensate for the low "box office" revenues.

William Blake

With few exceptions, British eighteenth-century artists needed the sale of prints of their works as a principal source of income. Generally, they relied on professional engravers and print publishers to reproduce and market their works. Most professional engravers were not fine artists themselves, and their names are largely forgotten today. A notable exception was the printmaker, poet, and self-proclaimed visionary William Blake (1757–1827), who, having worked as an engraver in his youth, decided to make prints of his own and use them to illustrate his writing. Blake became obsessed with producing handmade books, a goal that was first realized in two slim volumes of poetry, *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794). Each page in these two volumes features a poem by Blake and an illustration, often connected to the text by a decorative frame. Blake refused to use letterpress and insisted that text and image be printed from the same copper plate. To accomplish this



3-12 **William Blake**, *The Lamb*. From *Songs of Innocence*, copy b, 1789. Relief etching with watercolor, 4 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 2" (11.9 x 7.7 cm). Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Washington, DC.

goal, he invented a new etching technique that allowed him to write the text directly on the copper plate in his own beautiful handwriting. (Blake claimed to have learned the new technique from his deceased brother, who appeared before him in a vision.) Text and image were printed in a single color. Other colors were added by hand by Blake or by his wife Catherine. This elaborate method explains why Blake produced so few volumes.

Songs of Innocence and *Songs of Experience* were written in the manner of nursery rhymes. It is not certain whether they were intended for children or for adults. For while the poems, like the simple, almost naïve illustrations that accompany them, may appeal to children, they often contain profound meditations on good and evil, the divine and the demonic. Indeed, the two volumes were conceived as contrasts to one another. While the *Songs of Innocence* deal with a world of love and bliss, the *Songs of Experience* dwell on man's fallen state.

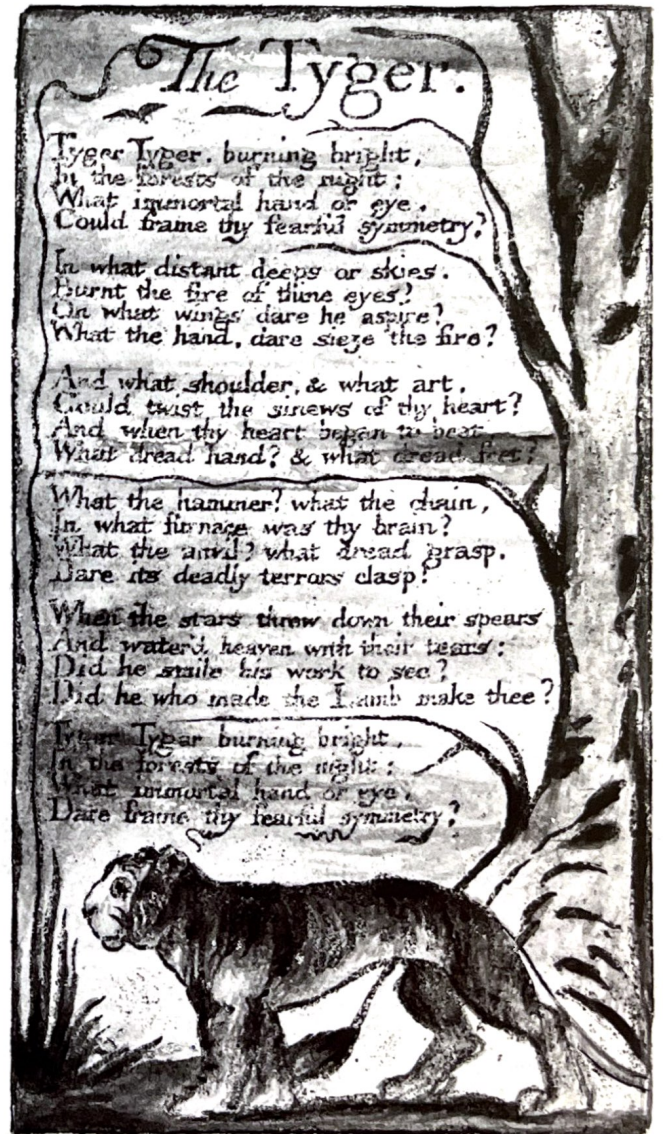
The Lamb in the *Songs of Innocence* (FIG. 3-12) and *The Tyger* (FIG. 3-13) in the *Songs of Experience* seem to carry the themes of the two volumes. Together, they represent what Blake

referred to as "the Contrary States of the Human Soul," opposing gentleness, humility, and innocence to brutality, pride, and experience. This opposition is suggested not only in the poetry but also in the illustrations. While the illustration for *The Lamb* shows gently curving lines and soft pastel colors, that of *The Tyger* is marked by a more austere style of drawing and dark, ominous colors.

Songs of Innocence and *Songs of Experience* were informed by Blake's admiration for the Swedish scientist and mystic theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). Swedenborg maintained that, while all creation has its origin in divine love, and is consequently perfect, that perfection has been disturbed by man's selfishness. Evil has come into the world because man loved himself more than God.

Most of Blake's subsequent illuminated books also show the impact of his Swedenborgian beliefs, but they are likewise marked by his unusual political ideas. A sympathizer

3-13 **William Blake**, *The Tyger*. From *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, copy n, 1795. Relief etching with watercolor, 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 2" (11 x 6.3 cm). Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

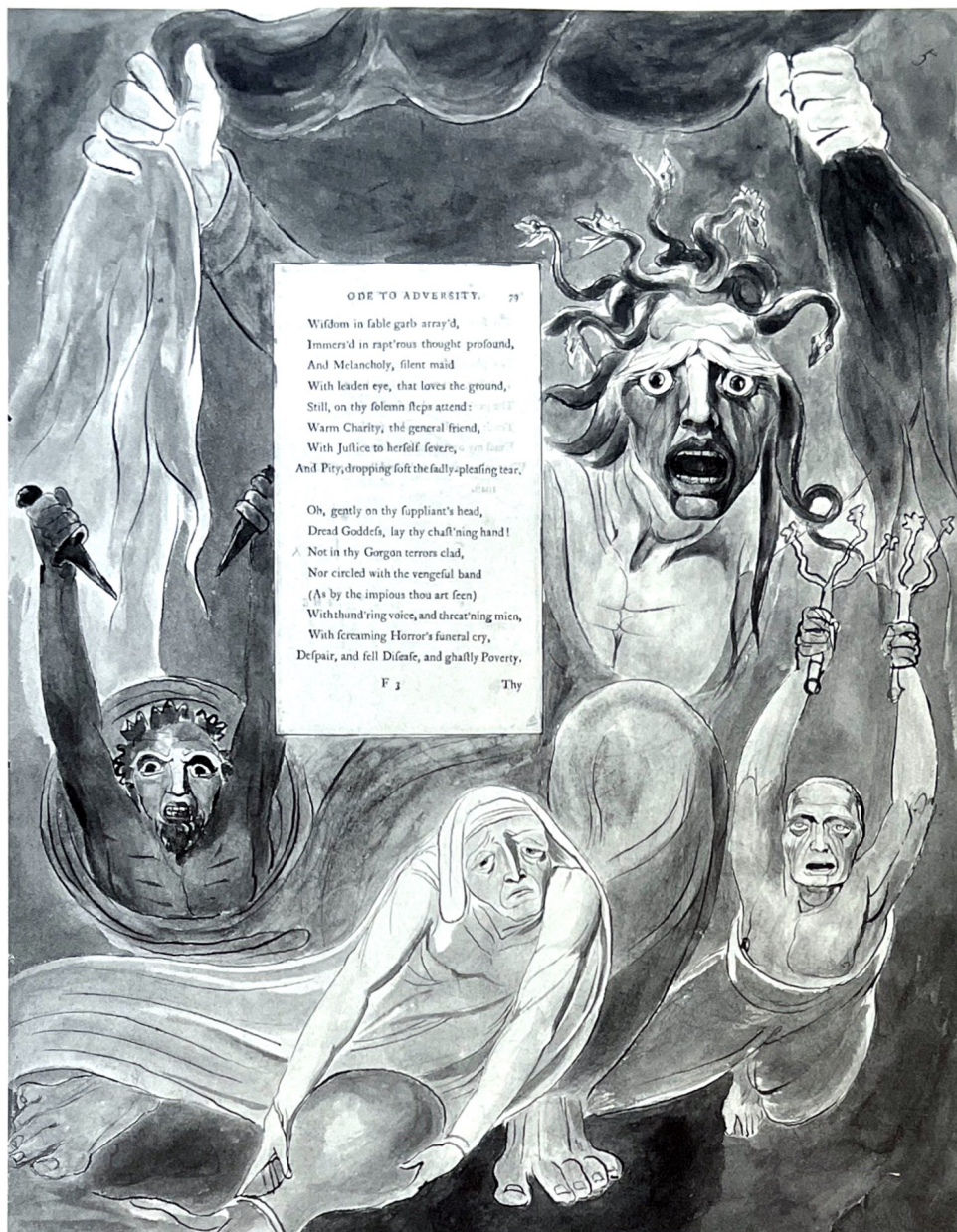




3-14 **William Blake,**
The Song of Los.
Frontispiece to the *Book of Los*, copy e, 1795.
Color printed from a
copper plate, 9 x 6"
(23.4 x 17.3 cm).
Henry E. Huntington
Library and Art Gallery,
San Marino, California.

with the French Revolution of 1789, Blake joined a radical political circle that also included Henry Fuseli and the writer Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797). The fusion of his mystical beliefs and radical political convictions led to the production in the 1790s of his so-called “prophetic,” or Lambeth, books (after the London suburb where Blake lived). In these he looked at the history of man’s mental and physical enslavement (*Book of Urizen*, *Book of Aphanias*, and *Book of Los*), as well as at its future (*America: A Prophecy* and *Europe: A Prophecy*). Both the texts and the illustrations of these books are cryptic and obscure, since Blake insisted

that their meaning would become clear only after long and careful study. Nonetheless, the illustrations often have a visceral effect on the viewer. *The Song of Los*, the frontispiece to the *Book of Los* (FIG. 3-14), may serve as an example. In it, we see a figure, possibly male, dressed only in a long white skirt, prostrated before an altar covered with a large open book. Above looms a large sun, partly obscured by dark blotches. The sun usually signifies fertility, growth, and enlightenment. Instead, this dark, festering celestial body speaks of a sickened world in which men find counsel in evil books and live in eternal darkness.



3-15 **William Blake**, *Ode to Adversity*. Illustration in *The Poems of Thomas Gray*, c.1797–8. Pen, ink, and watercolor on paper, 16 x 12" (41.9 x 32.4 cm). Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, Connecticut.

Blake's illuminated books found a small circle of admirers who, to keep him financially afloat, provided him with commissions. Some of these commissions were for engraved book illustrations; others were for sets of watercolors illustrating time-honored texts such as the Bible, Dante's *Inferno*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or works by more modern poets such as Edward Young (1683–1765) and Thomas Gray (1716–1771). Blake occasionally showed these watercolors at the Royal Academy or at the exhibitions of the Associated Painters in Watercolours, one of several watercolor societies that developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (see page 185).

The watercolor illustrating "Ode to Adversity" (FIG. 3-15) is one of a group of 166 watercolors made to illustrate the poems of Thomas Gray. The set was commissioned by Blake's close friend Fuseli as a present to his wife. Around the text of Gray's ode, which speaks of "Gorgon Terrors

clad," and "Horror's funeral cry/Despair, and fell Disease, and ghastly poverty," we see a fearsome Gorgon's head, surrounded by viciously snapping snakes and a number of other eerie figures, who are all looking threateningly at the viewer. Here, as in so many of Blake's works, sublimity has been carried to its limits.

Blake never practiced oil painting, but during the later part of his career he did develop a unique painting technique that allowed him to produce works that were larger than his book illustrations and watercolors. Mixing pigments with carpenter's glue, he applied these homemade paints to a canvas or thin copper plate that he had first coated with a mixture of glue and plaster. Blake referred to this technique as "tempera," although it is quite different from traditional tempera, in which the pigments are mixed with egg. Blake showed several of these paintings in a private exhibition in his brother's house in 1809. Among the works shown was *The Spiritual*



3-16 **William Blake**, *The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth*, 1805?. Tempera heightened with gold on canvas, 29 x 25" (74 x 62.7 cm). Tate Britain, London.

Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth (FIG. 3-16). In this enigmatic work, William Pitt the Younger, the British Prime Minister from 1783 until his death in 1806, appears as in a vision. Clad in a long gown, his head surrounded by a huge halo, the youthful Pitt (he was forty-seven when he died) holds a rein that

controls the Old Testament beast Behemoth, here a signifier of the powers of war unleashed by Pitt against the French. In the catalogue that Blake wrote for the exhibition of 1809, he claimed that his painting was inspired by a vision in which he saw ancient paintings and sculptures on the "walls of



3-17 **James Barry**, *Portrait of William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham*, 1778. Etching and aquatint, 17⁷/₈ x 14⁷/₁₆" (45.4 x 36.7 cm). British Museum, London.

Temples, Towers, Cities, Palaces . . . erected in the highly cultivated states of Egypt, Moab, Edom, Aram, among the Rivers of Paradise." These paintings, he claims, he endeavored to emulate, applying their grandeur and beauty to "modern Heroes, on small scale."

The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth exemplifies Blake's admixture of interests in both politics and theology. In Blake's all-encompassing historical vision, myth and reality, past and present all provide examples of the perennial struggle between good and evil, reason and irrationality.

Contemporary Heroes and Historical Context

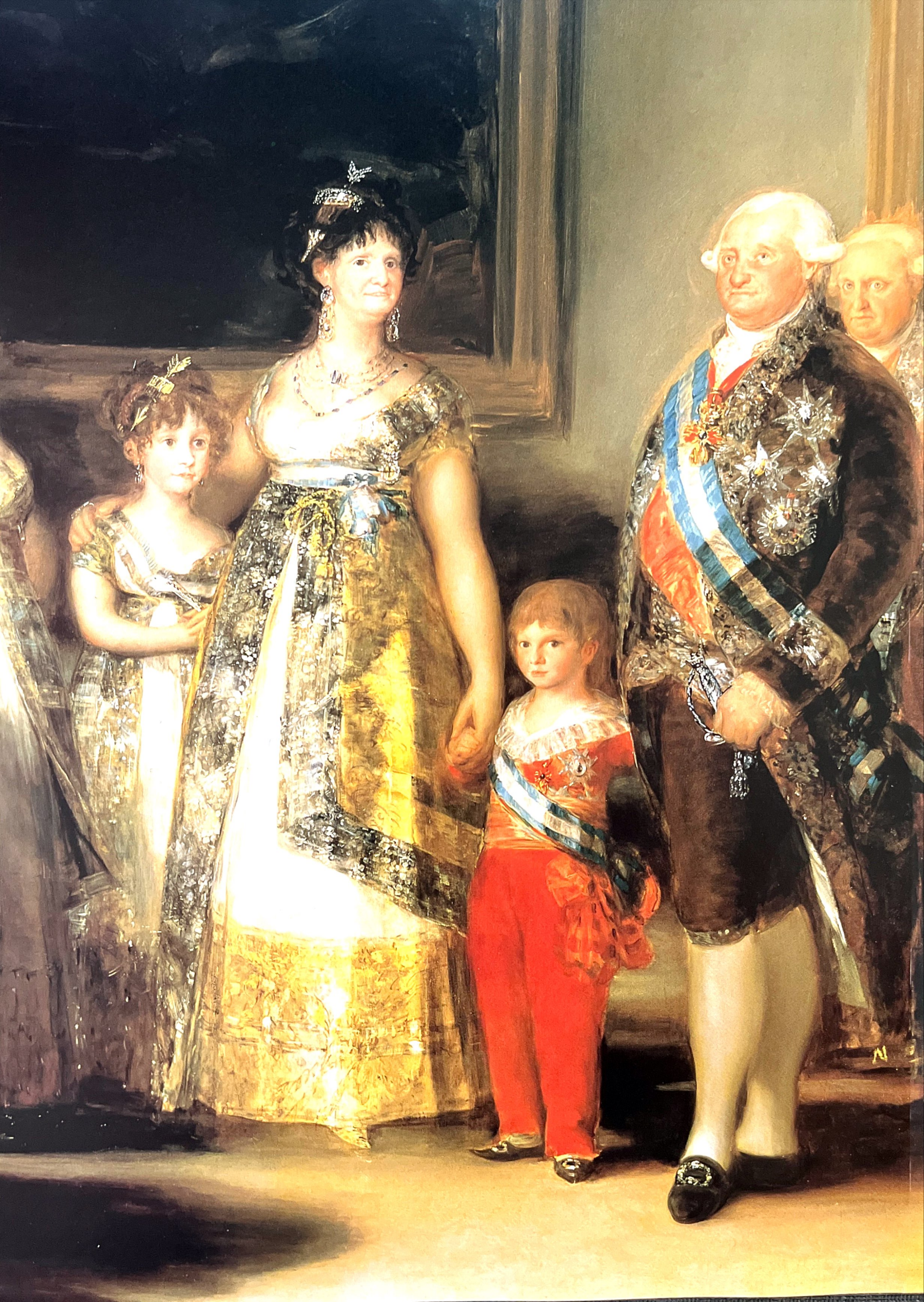
Blake's *The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth* strikes the modern viewer as a highly unusual image of a contemporary politician. In its day, it was unusual as well—not, however, because it presented Pitt in an imaginary context but because that context itself was exceptional in its display of Old Testament and Apocalyptic imagery.

In the eighteenth century contemporary heroes were commonly represented in Classical garb and context. James Barry's etched *Portrait of William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham* (FIG. 3-17), the father of William Pitt the Younger, is a case in

point. Commissioned just after his death in 1778, the print shows the earl portrayed as a Roman bust placed on a pedestal. Next to the bust stands the allegorical figure of Britannia, a buxom woman in Classical dress. With an arrow, she points at Pitt's accomplishments, which are inscribed on a pyramid. The dome of St Paul's Cathedral is partially visible in the background. Barry's image, so different from Blake's, is a more traditional representation of heroes in the eighteenth century, replete with Classical and allegorical references.

Probably the first British artist to break with this eighteenth-century tradition was Benjamin West. His *The Death of General Wolfe*, of 1771 (FIG. 3-18), was highly unusual at the time: its hero wears not ancient garb but contemporary dress, and his deeds are not shown by allegorical references but by depiction of the actual events. In so doing, West changed the traditional hero image and simultaneously created a new form of history painting. Unlike earlier history paintings, which depicted events in ancient or medieval history or episodes from literature, *The Death of General Wolfe* celebrates a contemporary event.

British Major-General James Wolfe was a famous hero of the Seven Years' War. While commanding the British forces against the French at Quebec in 1759, he was mortally wounded. As he lay dying, a soldier brought the news



Francisco Goya and Spanish Art at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century

Spain, a prominent world power during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, had lost much of its prestige by the beginning of the eighteenth. Although it retained a vast colonial empire in the Americas, much of the wealth this generated was squandered in futile wars in Europe.

In 1700 the last Spanish king of the princely Habsburg family died. Epileptic and deformed (his subjects called him "The Bewitched"), Carlos II left no heir, although several parties jockeyed to replace him. The deceased king had Habsburg cousins in Austria as well as French relatives belonging to the royal Bourbon family. Eventually, the Bourbon supporters prevailed and a grandson of Louis XIV, Philippe d'Anjou, ascended the Spanish throne as Felipe V (ruled 1700–46).

During much of Felipe's forty-six-year reign and that of his successor, Fernando VI (ruled 1746–59), Spain continued to fight European wars, mostly in order to maintain the Bourbons on the throne. Meanwhile, the country itself steadily decayed. Cities were dangerous; the infrastructure was poor; agriculture was backward; and public education was practically non-existent. There was no significant middle class, only a huge underclass of peasants and paupers and a small but extremely influential elite of clergy and aristocrats. The efforts of Fernando to bring about agricultural progress did little to change this rather dismal situation. His contribution

was primarily to the artistic life of Spain, as in 1752 he founded the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando.

Court Patronage under Carlos III: Tiepolo and Mengs

The advent of Carlos III (ruled 1759–88) brought many positive changes in Spanish society. An enlightened monarch, Carlos curbed the power of the church and the aristocracy, and promoted education, economic development, science, and the arts. With the help of his secretary of state, José Floridablanca (1728–1808), he built schools, established lending institutions for farmers, and initiated numerous building projects.

To decorate the newly built royal palace in Madrid, Carlos III invited the renowned painters Giovanni Battista Tiepolo and Anton Raphael Mengs (see pages 29 and 50) to Spain. Tiepolo, assisted by two of his sons, produced a series of exuberant Rococo ceiling frescos, such as *The Apotheosis of the Spanish Monarchy* (FIG. 6-1) in the dome of the antechamber, or *saleta*, to the throne room. Painted between 1764 and 1766, this fresco offers an illusionist view into the higher spheres, where a female figure representing the Spanish monarchy sits on an enormous piece of drapery floating on the clouds. Mercury flies through the sky, delivering her crown. Along the lower edge of the dome, additional gods and heroes—Venus, Mars, Hercules—emphasize the notion of a divinely sanctioned rule.

Francisco Goya, *The Family of Carlos IV*, 1800–01 (Detail of FIG. 6-8.)



6-1 **Giovanni Battista Tiepolo**, *The Apotheosis of the Spanish Monarchy*, 1764–6. Ceiling fresco, 5'9" x 3'5" (15 x 9 m). Royal Palace, Saleta de la Reina, Madrid.



6-2 **Anton Raphael Mengs**, *The Apotheosis of Hercules*, 1762–9 and 1775. Ceiling fresco, 31'2" x 33'10" (c. 9.5 x 10.3 m). Royal Palace, Antecámara de Gasparini, Madrid.

It is difficult to imagine a greater contrast than the one between Tiepolo's *Apotheosis of the Spanish Monarchy* and the frescos executed for the royal palace by Mengs. The latter's *The Apotheosis of Hercules* (FIG. 6-2), in the Antecámara de Gasparini, lacks the illusionist qualities of Tiepolo's Rococo fresco. Instead of creating a dramatic build-up towards the center of the ceiling, Mengs has concentrated his efforts on the edges, where he has arranged his figures in the manner of a Classical frieze. Thus his fresco continues the Neoclassical model that Mengs had first introduced in his *Parnassus* in the Villa Albani (see FIG. 2-8).

Mengs also painted a series of portraits of the royal family. His *Portrait of Carlos III* (FIG. 6-3), of 1761, follows the Baroque ruler portrait tradition, perfected by the French painter Rigaud (see FIG. 1-1). Dressed in ceremonial armor, the King is posed before the ubiquitous column, which signifies the solidity of his rule. The curtain, another stock element of Baroque portraits, lends it a formal appearance. Though Mengs has not ignored the King's less attractive features, most notably his oversized nose, he has also brought out the intelligence and spiritedness that Carlos brought to the Spanish throne. Pleased with Mengs's work,

6-3 **Anton Raphael Mengs**, *Portrait of Carlos III*, 1761. Oil on canvas, 60¹/₁₆ x 43⁵/₁₆" (1.54 x 1.1 m). Museo del Prado, Madrid.





6-4 **Francisco Goya**, *The Parasol*, 1777. Oil on canvas, 41 x 59 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (1.04 x 1.52 m). Museo del Prado, Madrid.

both as decorator and portraitist, Carlos III appointed him First Court Painter and asked him for help in reforming the Spanish art academy, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando. In this influential role, Mengs had an opportunity to reform art education in accordance with the Classical precepts that he had formulated during his association with Winckelmann in Rome.

The Making of Francisco Goya

While, in Madrid, Tiepolo and Mengs were pitting Rococo against Neoclassicism, in Fuendetodos, northeast of Madrid, a thirteen-year-old boy named Francisco Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828) was apprenticed by his father to a local painter. Like most provincial art students, Goya spent several tedious years copying engravings and drawing after plaster casts. At the age of seventeen, feeling that his training was complete, he left for Madrid.

With his provincial training, Goya had a hard time making a living in Madrid until he found a mentor in Francisco Bayeu (1734–1795). This painter, his future father-in-law, was twelve years older than Goya and well respected in Madrid. The connection became particularly important when Bayeu, together with Mengs, was asked to reform

the Royal Tapestry Manufactory of Santa Barbara in Madrid. Founded by Felipe V to compete directly with the famous Gobelin Manufactory in Paris, it had thus far not been very successful. Bayeu and Mengs intended to breathe new life into the tapestry factory by attracting innovative young artists to paint the initial designs, or cartoons. They also sought to introduce new themes. While previously most tapestries had depicted religious and mythological scenes, they encouraged genre subjects—that is, subjects taken from the events of daily life.

Goya was among those asked to work on these new designs. Between 1774 and 1792 he produced a steady stream of cartoons, which provided him with a regular income. *The Parasol* (FIG. 6-4), a cartoon for a tapestry that would hang in the princes' dining room in El Pardo, the royal hunting palace outside Madrid, is an early example. A pretty young woman sits on a hillock, with a little dog in her lap. Behind her stands her sweetheart, who shields her with a parasol. Stylistically, Goya's cartoon is rooted in the Rococo; at first glance, it recalls the decorative paintings of his French contemporary Jean-Honoré Fragonard. When Goya's *Parasol* and Fragonard's *Secret Meeting* (see FIG. 1-8) are closely compared, however, Goya's cartoon appears more broadly painted and less cluttered with detail. More importantly, while Fragonard's young men and women



6-5 **Francisco Goya**, *The Wounded Mason*, 1786–7. Oil on canvas, 8'10" x 3'7" (2.68 x 1.1 m). Museo del Prado, Madrid.

seem artificially pretty, Goya's figures seem earthy, more real. The artist's contemporaries would immediately have recognized the pair as a *maja* and *majo*, members of an urban subculture in eighteenth-century Spain. *Majas* and *majos*

were young women and men who worked as servants or small-time entrepreneurs to make a more or less honest living. Admired by the lower classes because of their gallant behavior and exotic dress, they were fascinating characters for the aristocracy as well.

Goya's interests in realism and popular culture are even more obvious in a set of six cartoons for tapestries representing the rural activities of the four seasons and two scenes of low-class life. One of these, *The Wounded Mason* (FIG. 6-5), shows two men carrying an injured laborer away from a construction site. It is an unusual image for its time, in that it focuses attention on the dismal living conditions of Spain's working class. Painted in dark, muted colors, it seems hardly suitable for a decorative tapestry. Nonetheless, this tapestry and the others, equally devoted to peasant and low-class life, were hung in the princes' dining room in El Pardo, which suggests that they fitted within Carlos's enlightened philosophy of government.

While producing cartoons for the Royal Tapestry Manufactory, Goya regularly accepted commissions for religious paintings. He also worked hard to develop a portrait clientele among the aristocracy. His first breakthrough came in 1783, with the *Portrait of the Count of Floridablanca* (FIG. 6-6). The secretary of state is shown in his office, standing in front of his desk. Although he looks straight at the viewer, he seems to gesture towards Goya, who has come to deliver his portrait. Perhaps he is comparing Goya's painted likeness with his own image in an invisible mirror, hung just about where the viewer is standing. This would explain his frontal pose as well as his expression of curious scrutiny. Goya's portrait differs radically from the more traditional *Portrait of Carlos III* by Mengs (see FIG. 6-3), because it places the sitter in a genre context. Rather than posing for the artist, the count seems to be going about his usual affairs. His tasks, on this day, include the approval of his portrait as well as the discussion of some floor plans with an architect. (The figure in the background has been identified as Francesco Sabbatini, the King's favorite architect.) While the portrait still retains some Baroque conventions, such as the drapery in the background (to which the painting is rather incongruously attached), it clearly presents a new style of portraiture, less formal and more intimately engaged in the subject's life.

Goya's *Portrait of the Count of Floridablanca* contains several references to *Las Meninas* (The Ladies in Waiting; FIG. 6-7), a portrait of Infanta (Princess) Margarita María and her retinue by Diego Velázquez. Among them is its genre-like character, the presence of the artist in the portrait, and the play with mirrors (in *Las Meninas*, a mirror reflects the Infanta's parents, the King and Queen). Goya's "quotations" from Velázquez's work were probably intentional; the Spanish seventeenth-century court painter was his role model, and he intended to follow in his footsteps.





OPPOSITE
6-6 **Francisco Goya**, *Portrait of the Count of Floridablanca*, 1783.
Oil on canvas, 8'7" x 5'5"
(2.62 x 1.66 m). Banco de España,
Madrid.

6-7 **Diego Velázquez**, *Las Meninas (The Ladies in Waiting)*, 1656.
Oil on canvas, approximately 10'5" x 9'1" (3.18 x 2.76 m). Museo del
Prado, Madrid.



6-8 **Francisco Goya**, *The Family of Carlos IV*, 1800–01. Oil on canvas, 9'2" x 11' (2.8 x 3.36 m). Musco del Prado, Madrid.

Goya as Court Painter

The *Portrait of the Count of Floridablanca* was an important step toward Goya's goal of becoming a court painter. The count introduced him to the King's brother, who then presented him to the King. In 1786 he was appointed *Pintor del Rey* (Painter to the King), the same position that Velázquez had held in 1623. Three years later he was promoted to Court Painter, and finally, in 1799, he became First Court Painter.

By that time Carlos III had died and had been succeeded by his son, Carlos IV (ruled 1788–1808). The latter was a kindly man but an ineffective ruler, whose power was usurped by his wife (who slept with the Prime Minister) and, in due course, by his son. Of this conniving clan, Goya painted his most ambitious and intriguing portrait, *The Family of Carlos IV* (FIG. 6-8). It is a life-size, full-length portrait of the royal family, informally grouped around its three major members: Carlos IV on the right, Queen María

Luisa in the center, and Crown Prince Fernando on the left. The women are bedecked with jewelry, and the men are covered with ribbons and insignia. Behind the group on the left, barely visible in the shadow, stands a soberly dressed Goya, facing a huge easel.

It has often been noted that Goya's position behind the royal family defies common sense unless we imagine a scenario in which the royals are standing in front of a large mirror and Goya is painting their reflection. To think of Goya's painting as a "copy" of a mirror image has the advantage that it offers an explanation for its uncompromising realism. This is especially noticeable in the portraits of the king and queen—he with his beady eyes and swollen pink face, and she with her hooked nose, double chin, and vacuous smile. Although they look rather buffoonish to us today, the royals apparently liked the painting. The Queen was pleased, and the King authorized generous payment to the artist for his materials. Like Floridablanca, they must

have looked for a mirror image of themselves in the portrait, and Goya provided it quite faithfully.

The presence of the artist in *The Family of Carlos IV* once again recalls *Las Meninas*. A comparison of the two royal portraits suggests, however, that Goya's attitude has become more ambivalent since he painted *Floridablanca*. Now a master in his own right, Goya at once tried to emulate and reject Velázquez's example. Thus while the inclusion of his self-portrait recalls Velázquez, *The Family of Carlos IV* lacks both the genre character and the spatial depth of *Las Meninas*. Goya's figures are compressed in a shallow space, much like Carlos III in his portrait by Mengs. But Goya's picture lacks the formality and idealism of Mengs's Neoclassical portraits. Instead, he has brought a new informality and realism to court painting that anticipates nineteenth-century portraiture and even photography (see FIG. 14-1).

Goya's court status helped to make him a fashionable portraitist in aristocratic circles. Over the years, he painted numerous dukes, counts, marquises, and their families. The *Portrait of the Duchess of Alba* (FIG. 6-9), widow of one of Goya's lifelong patrons, stands out for its originality. The duchess is set against a loosely sketched landscape background. With one finger, she points to an inscription in the sand which reads, "Solo Goya" ("only Goya"), hinting at her brief infatuation with the artist following her husband's death. She wears the dress of a *maja*: a black ankle-length skirt, girded at the waist with a red sash, and a black lace mantilla over a gold bodice. The loose, almost bravura technique that Goya uses sets his work apart from that of his Neoclassical contemporaries in Spain and elsewhere in Europe. A detail of the painting, shown in FIG. 6-10, shows how masterfully he depicts the black lace with



6-9 **Francisco Goya**, *Portrait of the Duchess of Alba*, 1797. Oil on canvas, 6'10" x 4'10" (2.1 x 1.49 m). Hispanic Society of America, New York.

6-10 **Francisco Goya**, detail of fig. 6-9, *Portrait of the Duchess of Alba*.



Etching

Next to engraving (see *Reproducing Works of Art*; page 33), etching was the most commonly used technique to print images in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While engraving was largely practiced by professional printmakers, often for the purpose of making reproductive prints, etching was a fine-art medium that attracted such well-known artists as Rembrandt in the seventeenth century, and Tiepolo, Piranesi, and Goya in the eighteenth.

Etchings are printed from metal (usually copper) plates into which designs are "bitten" by strong chemical acids. To produce an etching, the artist covers a copper plate with a thin layer of etching ground, a soft mixture of resin, wax, and tar. In this layer, he draws with an etching needle, scratching the ground away so that the copper is exposed. The plate is then placed in a bath of acid, which etches away the copper

in the lines that the artist has drawn. The etched lines will get deeper and wider the longer they are left in the acid. After the etching process is complete, the ground is removed and the plate is inked with a roller. The surface of the plate is subsequently wiped clean so that the ink stays only in the lines. A sheet of paper is placed over the plate and the two are run through a press so that the ink in the lines is pressed on to the paper.

In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the etching technique became ever more sophisticated. The invention of the aquatint process allowed artists to add tone and even color to the lines of their etchings. Goya, in particular, mastered the aquatint technique, which allowed him to create dramatic *chiaroscuro* effects in his prints.

a few virtuoso strokes. It is a style of painting that had evolved from the artist's early occupation as a tapestry designer, which had required broad strokes and rapid execution. At the same time, Goya's brushwork is reminiscent of Velázquez in its bold application of paint.

Goya's Prints

In 1799 Goya published an album of eighty etchings, entitled *Los Caprichos* (The Fancies). This was a new medium for the artist, who had thus far done mostly altarpieces, tapestry cartoons, and portraits (see *Etching*, above). With the *Caprichos*, Goya not only turned to a new medium, printmaking, but he also set himself up as an independent artist, who produced and marketed his own work.

Goya put a notice in the *Diario de Madrid*, the city's main newspaper, to advertise the *Caprichos*. He described his prints as "A Collection of Prints of Capricious Subjects, Invented and Etched by Don Francisco Goya," and noted that they were for sale in a local "perfume and liquor" shop for 320 *reales*. He further elaborated:

Since the artist is convinced that the censure of human errors and vices (though they may seem the province of Eloquence and Poetry) may also be the object of Painting, he has chosen as subjects adequate for his work, from the multitude of follies and blunders common in every civil society, as well as from the vulgar prejudices and lies authorized by custom, ignorance or interest, those that he has thought most suitable matter for ridicule.

By advertising his prints as a form of social commentary, Goya placed them into a broader eighteenth-century

context of pictorial satire. This tradition originated in Britain with the prints of William Hogarth (see page 32) and continued to flourish in that country during the latter part of the century, thanks to artists such as James

6-11 **Francisco Goya**, *Se quebró el cántaro!* (*Someone Broke the Pitcher!*), from *Los Caprichos*, no. 25, 1797–8. Etching and aquatint, 8³/₁₆ x 6" (20.7 x 15.2 cm). Hispanic Society of America, New York (1799 edition).



Gillray (1757–1815) and Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827). British satirical prints were certainly known in Spain because they were widely exported throughout Europe. While British printmakers tended toward political satire (see *Georgian Britain*, page 74), Goya focused on social satire. As a court painter, he was not likely to attack the royal regime, even though some of his cartoons targeted the clergy and the landed aristocracy, which gained renewed power under Carlos IV. In his *Caprichos*, Goya expressed enlightened opinions at a time when the Enlightenment was rapidly losing ground.

The *Caprichos* fall into two groups. In the first forty or so prints, societal ills are depicted in a straightforward way. *Capricho* no. 25, for example, shows an enraged mother beating her child (FIG. 6-11). “*Se quebró el cántaro!*” (“Someone Broke the Pitcher!”) reads the caption, suggesting the mother’s justification for abuse. The message here is clear: people accuse others of wrongdoing, without seeing the wrongs they do themselves.

A second group of *Caprichos* presents fantastic imagery, rooted in an old literary convention of describing the evils

of the world as a nightmare. Goya has depicted strange creatures of the night (bats, owls, witches, goblins, giants, etc.) for the purpose of making satirical comments. In *Capricho* no. 68, *Linda maestra!* (A Fine Teacher!), an old witch teaches a young one how to ride a broom (FIG. 6-12). The print exposes people’s eagerness to follow bad examples, even though the results of doing so (becoming an ugly, haggard old witch) are evidently negative.

Also in the second group is an etching that was, at one point, probably intended as the album’s frontispiece—*Capricho* no. 43, *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* (The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters; FIG. 6-13). It shows an artist, perhaps Goya himself, asleep at his drawing table and assaulted (presumably in a dream) by owls and bats. The print seems to comment on human existence in general, and on the work of the artist in particular. First of all, the print suggests that the evils of the world come about when reason sleeps. When man is not rationally in control, then instinct, emotion, and superstition can overtake him. The more specific, artistic meaning of the print is elucidated by Goya himself in his caption, which reads:

6-12 **Francisco Goya**, *Linda maestra! (A Fine Teacher!)*, from *Los Caprichos*, no. 68, 1797–8. Etching and aquatint, 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 6" (21.3 x 15 cm). Hispanic Society of America, New York (1799 edition).



6-13 **Francisco Goya**, *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos (The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters)*, from *Los Caprichos*, no. 43, 1797–8. Etching and aquatint, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 6" (21.6 x 15 cm). Hispanic Society of America, New York (1799 edition).





6-14 **Francisco Goya**, *Grande hazaña! Con muertos!* (*Great Heroism! With Dead Men!*), from *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (*The Disasters of War*), no. 39, c.1810–15. Etching and aquatint, British Museum, London.

"Imagination abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters; united with her, she is the mother of the arts and the source of their wonders." This summarizes Goya's view of artistic creation as a process in which imagination is held in check by reason.

Although the *Caprichos* brought little financial success, Goya produced three more albums in the years to come. Of these, *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (*The Disasters of War*), of 1810–15, is perhaps the most poignant, because the prints in this album show what happens when mankind abandons reason, and hatred and revenge take control of human behavior. The series was prompted by political events that dramatically changed the Spain that Goya had known in his youth. In 1807 Napoleon turned his attention to conquering Spain. Using force, threats, and political manipulation, he persuaded the royal family to step down, and put his brother Joseph on the throne. Riots broke out in Madrid on May 2, 1808 (Spain's national holiday), and a bloody war of independence ensued that would last for six years. In this guerrilla war, small groups of resisters (so-called *juntas*) attacked French army units with whatever

weapons they could lay their hands on—pitchforks, axes, knives, etc. The *Desastres* depicts scenes from this war, some of which Goya may have witnessed on a trip he made from Madrid to Zaragoza. Although the artist supported the *juntas*, his prints seem impartial since he shows the French and the Spanish alike committing extreme atrocities. *Grande hazaña! Con muertos!* (*Great Heroism! With Dead Men!*; FIG. 6-14) exemplifies his virulent obsession with the brutality of war. Three castrated, mutilated corpses and some body parts are tied to a tree. It is impossible to make out whether they are French or Spanish. The emphasis is on the horror of war—a time when human decency disappears and bestiality reigns.

The Execution of the Rebels

Although Goya completed eighty-two plates, between about 1810 and 1815, the *Desastres* series was not published until 1863, some thirty-five years after the artist's death. Perhaps Goya felt that it was impossible to sell the series,



6-15 **Francisco Goya**, *The Execution of the Rebels on the Third of May, 1808*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 8'8" x 11'4" (2.66 x 3.45 m). Museo del Prado, Madrid.

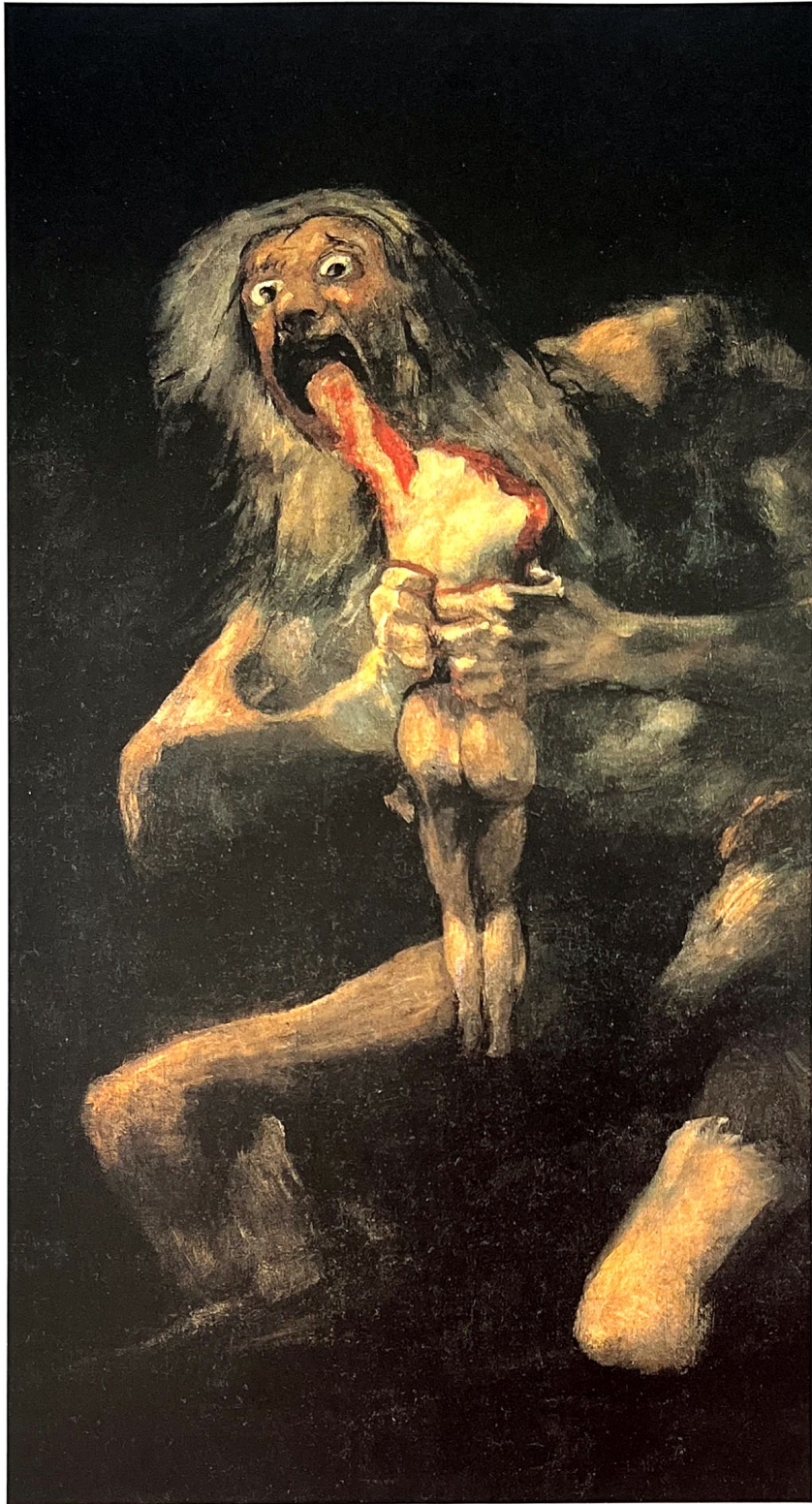
either because the prints were too explicit or because they did not glorify the Spanish rebels sufficiently.

Goya was sensitive to the use of art as propaganda, and acted accordingly. In two large canvases, painted in 1814, he represented two significant events at the beginning of the war. One was the riot in Madrid on May 2, 1808; the other was the bloody execution of the rebels by French soldiers the next day. Goya proposed these two paintings, and perhaps two more, to the government and eventually was given a small monthly stipend to carry them out. In *The Execution of the Rebels on the Third of May, 1808* (FIG. 6-15) we see a group of captured rebels, led under cover of night to an execution ground, where a French firing squad shoots them one by one. The powerful contrast between the soldiers and the rebels brings the dramatic scene to life. The soldiers, seen from the back, resemble automatons with their identical uniforms and poses. The rebels, lit by the lamp, show their humanity, mortality, and courage in the face of death. The man about to be executed shows a dramatic range of emotions. Dressed in a white shirt and light pants, kneeling before his captors, he raises up his arms in



6-16 *The Execution of Five Franciscan Friars at the Hand of a French Firing Squad, 1813*. Illustration of *Memorias Históricas de la Muerte [. . .] de los RR. PP. [. . .] fusilados por los franceses el día 18 de Enero 1812* (Valencia, 1813). Engraving by Miguel Gamborino, probably after a drawing by Andrés Cruá. Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.

a gesture both desperate and defiant. Some art historians have compared his pose to that of the crucified Christ, explaining it as Goya's way of portraying the struggle between Spanish Catholicism and French atheism.



6-17 **Francisco Goya**, *Saturn Devouring One of his Children*, 1820–1823. Mural transferred to canvas, 57 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 32 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (1.45 m x 83 cm). Museo del Prado, Madrid.

The Execution of the Rebels is unprecedented in the history of painting, since it represents neither a glorious victory nor a heroic battle. Instead it portrays human slaughter in all its sordidness. Yet, while this raw subject had never before been treated in high art, it did appear in eighteenth-century popular prints such as the anonymous print from 1813 showing the slaughter of five Franciscan friars by French soldiers (FIG. 6-16). These

prints were not commissioned by kings or generals as nationalist propaganda. Instead, they were sold to common folk, perhaps to induce their patriotism. Goya, too, must have envisioned his paintings as public works, to be hung in places where they would be accessible to everyone. Unfortunately, nothing is known about the way in which they were displayed after Goya had finished them.

Casa del Sordo

The restoration of Fernando VII to the throne in 1814 did not bring a renewal of portrait commissions from the aristocracy. Apart from a few church commissions, Goya had to produce for an uncertain market. Between 1814 and his death in 1828, he did two more print albums, one devoted to bullfighting (*Tauromaquia*), the other a satirical series (*Los Proverbios*, or *The Proverbs*) analogous to *Los Caprichos*. He also produced a number of genre paintings, some of which recalled his early tapestry designs. Perhaps most unusual among his late works is a series of murals made for his country house just outside Madrid. Nicknamed the House of the Deaf Man, or *Quinta del Sordo* (Goya had become deaf after an illness in 1792), it contained fourteen large paintings, done directly on the plaster, in the main rooms on the first and second floors. These paintings depict scenes from religion, myth, and daily life, seeming to recreate the *Caprichos* on a larger scale. Like the latter, they illustrate a journey from reality into a dream world, in which evil comes alive. (It has recently been suggested that the paintings in the *Casa del Sordo* were executed by Goya's son; until further proof is adduced, they will probably continue to be attributed to the father.) *Saturn Devouring One of His Children* (FIG. 6-17), a particularly

grotesque example, illustrates the myth of the Roman god Saturn, who is told that one of his children will dethrone him. To prevent this, he decides to eat them one by one.

In Goya's image, Saturn emerges from the dark, his face distorted with hatred and fear. His mouth opens wide to take another bite from a human, whose mutilated form recalls the bodies in the *Desastres*. Goya was between seventy-four and seventy-six years of age when he did these paintings, and his view shows an old man's sense of bitterness and defeat. He had seen the world change from a place ruled by reason and optimism to one controlled by fear, madness, and destruction. *Saturn Devouring One of his Children* represents Goya's conclusion that mankind is ultimately self-destructive, for to kill one's offspring is to destroy the future.

Spanish Art after Goya

Goya so dominates our modern-day notion of Spanish art at the end of the eighteenth century that we often forget that he was just one of many artists working in Spain at the time. His work was admired by his contemporaries for its inventiveness, bravura technique, and mastery of color. At the same time, he was criticized for a lack of patience and discipline and for his disregard of the rules of art.

6-18 **José de Madrazo y Agudo**, *The Death of Viriato*, 1808. Oil on canvas, 10'1" x 15'2" (3.07 x 4.62 m). Museo del Prado, Madrid.



Goya had few followers in Spain, in part because the Academy, reformed by Mengs, promoted a Classical curriculum. Most of the young painters used a style that was related to that of David. In fact, many of them studied with David, who, at the turn of the eighteenth century, headed a huge teaching studio that attracted aspiring artists from all over Europe. José de Madrazo (1781–1859) is an excellent example of one of Goya's counterparts. His early *The Death of Viriato* (FIG. 6-18) differs radically from Goya's *Execution of the Rebels* in style and iconography. Rather than representing a contemporary war scene, it refers to it indirectly by representing a scene of Spanish resistance to Roman occupation in the second century BCE. Viriato, the hero of that war, led a guerrilla troop against the Romans. His death, at the hand of two of his soldiers who had been bribed by the enemy, signified the end of Spanish resistance. It also exposed the evil and cowardice of his Roman enemies. Madrazo's *Death of Viriato* exemplifies Neoclassical painting in its Classical, heroic theme as well as in its frieze-like composition. It calls to mind some of David's famous deathbed scenes (such as

Andromache or *The Death of Socrates*; see FIGS. 2-17 and 2-19), although it lacks their sobriety and simplicity.

Goya's successor as First Court Painter, Vicente López (1772–1850), studied not with David, but at the Academy in Madrid, where, thanks to Mengs, he was likewise trained along Neoclassical lines. López was one of the most important portrait painters in Spain in the first half of the nineteenth century. In addition to numerous portraits of the royal family (his *Portrait of Fernando VII* is in the Hispanic Society in New York), he painted a portrait of Goya at age eighty, two years before the artist's death (FIG. 6-19). Done in the detailed, meticulous Neoclassical fashion, the portrait contrasts interestingly with Goya's own *Self-Portrait* (FIG. 6-20), painted eleven years earlier. The latter, painted in the sketchy manner of Goya's later years, shows the artist the way he saw himself—a rugged individualist, worn by the trials and tribulations of life. López's portrait, more official and public in nature, shows a different Goya: feisty and crusty, but self-confident in the knowledge of his significance in the history of Spanish art.



6-19 **Vicente López**, *Portrait of Francisco Goya*, 1826. Oil on canvas, 36½ x 29½" (93 x 75 cm). Museo del Prado, Madrid.



6-20 **Francisco Goya**, *Self-Portrait*, 1815. Oil on canvas, 18 x 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (46 x 35 cm).
Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Horace Vernet

To Stendhal, the most outstanding representative of the “new art” was Horace Vernet (1789–1863). A painter’s son, Vernet had intended to follow in his father’s footsteps, painting hunting and war scenes. But his ambition to paint heroic Napoleonic battle paintings was cut short when the Restoration regime took over. In 1822 two of his paintings, one representing a revolutionary battle, the other a scene of the defense of Paris against the allied troops in 1814, were refused by the Salon jury for fear of political repercussions. Vernet promptly exhibited both paintings in his studio, where they drew such crowds that the jurors realized that they had made these works quite the rage by rejecting them. At the following Salon of 1824, Vernet was allowed to exhibit all of the nearly forty works he submitted. Even his Napoleonic battle scenes were accepted, as long as Napoleon himself did not feature in them.

One of these, titled *The Battle of Montmirail* (FIG. 9-6), to Stendhal epitomized Romantic painting, not only because it dealt with a contemporary theme but also because of the “amount of pleasure” it gave to the spectator. While that comment at first may seem strange, it points to a major paradigm shift that had taken place in the early decades of the nineteenth century. No longer was art expected to educate and edify the viewer by means of moralizing subjects and noble, idealized forms. Instead, it was to affect the spectator at a visceral level through subjects that evoked strong emotions, and through striking colors and forms that appealed powerfully to the senses.

The Battle of Montmirail depicts war in all its chaos and savagery. Unlike Napoleonic battle paintings such as Gros’s *The Battle of Eylau* (see FIG. 5-21), it does not glorify a single hero. Instead, it shows masses of soldiers fighting, struggling, and dying. Vernet’s journalistic approach lends to his work a sense of immediacy and truth that is distinct from Gros’s carefully constructed propaganda image.

Théodore Géricault

If we were asked today which artist best answered Stendhal’s call for a new, Romantic art, our choice would probably not be Vernet but his good friend Théodore Géricault (1791–1824). If Vernet approached modern scenes like a journalist, representing them with painstaking accuracy and in minute detail, Géricault’s engagement with the present was more philosophical. His goal appears to have been



9-7 **Théodore Géricault**, *Charging Chasseur*, 1812. Oil on canvas, 11'5" x 8'9" (3.49 x 2.66 m). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

the profound exploration of the tragedies of modern life. Stendhal’s choice was, nonetheless, understandable. While Vernet exhibited nearly forty paintings at the Salon of 1824, Géricault’s work was notably absent. The artist had died several months before the Salon opened, at the age of just thirty-two. In his tragically short life he had exhibited only three works—at the Salons of 1812, 1814, and 1819—hardly enough to make a broad impact in Paris.

Géricault’s childhood coincided with the rise of Napoleon, and his adolescence with the great battles of the Empire—Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena. As a student in the famed atelier of Pierre-Narcisse Guérin (1774–1833), he may have aspired to paint war scenes, following the example of Gros, his artistic role model. His love of horses, both in the flesh and as artistic subjects, would have made him especially suited to that task. As it was, Géricault reached artistic maturity just as the Empire crumbled. His first two military paintings were also his last. Both were exhibited at the Salon of 1814, which opened only months after Paris fell to the allied troops. One, a painting that he had already exhibited once before, in 1812, represented a cavalry officer of the regiment of the *chasseurs* (see FIG. 9-7); the other, fresh off the easel, a wounded *cuirassier* (see FIG. 9-9). The contrast between the two paintings, one bursting with energy, the other sunken in defeat, cannot have been lost



9-8 **Peter Paul Rubens,**
Hippopotamus and Crocodile Hunt,
 c. 1615–16. Oil on canvas,
 8'2" x 12'7" (2.48 x 3.21 m).
 Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

on the visitors to the Salon. Géricault's paintings painfully illustrated the changed fate of France in the course of a few years.

Charging Chasseur (FIG. 9-7) represents a cavalry officer on a rearing horse, ready to attack. David's *Napoleon Crossing the Alps at the Saint-Bernard Pass* (see FIG. 5-10) had presented an earlier example of this motif. Yet, unlike David, who shows the rider in profile, Géricault, in a dramatic tour de force, represents the horse diagonally from the rear. (It is as if the horse is jumping away from an invisible attacker, whom the rider turns around to strike with his sword.) Géricault has created a powerful sense of space quite different from the more relief-like effect in David's painting. Even Gros had not attempted such dramatic foreshortening effects, which were beyond the limits of the Classical aesthetic. One has to go back to seventeenth-century Baroque paintings, such as Rubens's *Hippopotamus and Crocodile Hunt* (FIG. 9-8), to find a similar interest in spatial dynamics. Géricault's brushwork recalls Rubens as well, showing a freedom that is quite distinct from the smooth paint surfaces that characterize the works of David and his followers.

Wounded Cuirassier Leaving the Field of Battle (FIG. 9-9) may have been conceived as a pendant (one of a matching pair of paintings) to *Charging Chasseur*, even though it is larger. It represents a member of Napoleon's feared "steel hammer" cavalry, staggering down a slope. Using his saber as a crutch, and grabbing on to his frightened horse, he looks back over his shoulder to make sure he is not followed. From a technical point of view, *Wounded Cuirassier* is less

daring than *Charging Chasseur*. From the point of view of content, however, the painting is novel in that it monumentalizes the "anti-hero." Géricault's cuirassier is a loser, limping stealthily from the battlefield. Such a scene would have been unthinkable in war paintings done for Napoleon, which were required to present war in a glorious light. Yet, *Wounded Cuirassier* is not a propaganda painting; it is a painting "from one Frenchman to another." The soldier's abandonment of the battlefield in an attempt to save his life expresses a commonly shared feeling of lassitude with war. The painting may be seen as a metaphor for France's recent capitulation to allied troops and its unwillingness to have more blood shed for France.

Géricault's next and last submission to the Salon, *The Raft of the Medusa* (FIG. 9-10), is his best-known work, with good reason. A five-year interval separates *The Raft* from Géricault's two military paintings. In the intervening years, the artist had traveled to Italy, where he had improved his skills in drawing the human figure and creating monumental, multi-figure compositions. At the same time, he had remained interested in representing contemporary life. In the drawings and paintings he did in Italy, scenes of daily life in Rome alternated with timeless episodes from Classical mythology, reflecting some ambivalence toward the contemporary and the Classical. Signs of this ambivalence still linger in *The Raft of the Medusa*. Even though it depicts a contemporary event, it is centered on the male nude, the chief subject of Classical art.

The Raft of the Medusa was inspired by an incident during the summer of 1816, when the *Medusa*, a French frigate



9.9 **Théodore Géricault**, *Wounded Cuirassier Leaving the Field of Battle*, Salon of 1814. Oil on canvas, 11'7" x 9'8" (3.53 x 2.94 m).
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



9-10 **Théodore Géricault**, *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1819. Oil on canvas, 16'1" x 23'6" (4.9 x 7.16 m). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

transporting colonists and soldiers to Senegal, ran aground near the west coast of Africa. When it became necessary to abandon ship, it appeared that the lifeboats had room for only half of the approximately four hundred people on board. To accommodate the others, the ship's carpenter assembled a raft using some of the wood from the ship. The colonists and the low-rank soldiers were herded onto the raft, which was so overloaded that it was half submerged under the water. Although the men in the lifeboats had promised to tow the raft ashore, they soon cut the cables, preferring to save themselves. The rudderless raft was left at the mercy of the waves.

Within a week, all but fifteen passengers had died. The survivors were eventually rescued by a search boat. On their return to Paris in the fall, one survivor wrote an account of the events, which leaked to the press. A huge scandal ensued, because it became obvious that the *Medusa* disaster was caused by the incompetence of a captain who owed his appointment not to his nautical skills but to nepotism in the highest ranks of government. The newly restored Bourbons were facing growing opposition. For their critics, the raft of the *Medusa* became a symbol of France, a country adrift for lack of a competent leader.

Géricault's decision to base a painting on the *Medusa* affair was unusual at the time. Although printed images of

the raft had been produced by minor artists, a current event such as this had never been the subject of a monumental painting. Of course, under Napoleon, artists had painted contemporary battle scenes in heroic dimensions. But those paintings commemorated episodes that glorified the ruler who had made them happen. The *Medusa* affair was neither an important historical event nor a propaganda opportunity. On the contrary, it was an isolated episode involving the commonest of people—farmers, soldiers, and sailors.

Géricault's treatment was original as well. Faced with the task of turning journalism into art, he steered a careful course between realism and idealism. He went to great lengths to learn all the details of the event, only to ignore them selectively as he transformed the scene into one that transcends the timely and specific (for more on the genesis of the painting, see *The Making of The Raft of the Medusa*, page 213). *The Raft of the Medusa* represents the fifteen survivors at the moment when they see the ship that is coming to their rescue. Set obliquely to the picture plane, the raft fills the width of the canvas, creating a sense of close-up. Of the men on the raft, some react with enthusiasm, raising themselves up to wave their shirts to attract the ship. Others are too weak or dejected to move. The figures on the raft are caught in a diagonal upward sweep,

The Making of The Raft of the Medusa



The Raft of the Medusa was Géricault's first (and, as it turned out, his only) major figure composition, and it involved extensive preparations. The artist made numerous preliminary sketches, in which he searched for the episode in the real-life drama that offered the greatest possibility for a meaningful work. These show that he hesitated between scenes of fighting or mutiny on the raft (FIG. 9.2-1), of cannibalism, and of final rescue. His choice of the episode of the sighting of the rescue ship was no doubt based on his desire to maximize the emotional breadth and drama of the painting.

In addition to compositional studies, Géricault made numerous drawings for individual figures on the raft, using some of the survivors and friends, as well as professionals, as models. He also, at this time, made several oil sketches of severed heads and limbs. It has long been assumed that Géricault painted these grim studies in a morgue, in an effort to bring more verisimilitude to his representation of dead and dying people on the raft. But no direct correspondence between the sketches and *The Raft* can be found. Moreover, the heads and limbs all seem carefully posed, in the way that a still life painter would pose his objects. In a study of two severed heads, a female and a male head are juxtaposed on white sheets almost in the way one would see a married couple lying in bed; and in *Study of Arm and Two Feet* (FIG. 9.2-2) an arm tenderly embraces one of the feet as if in a homo-erotic encounter. These macabre "still lifes" seem to defy the traditional subject categories since they confuse the boundaries between still life and narrative figure painting.

9.2-1 **Théodore Géricault**, *Mutiny on the Raft*, 1818. Pen drawing, 16 $\frac{1}{3}$ x 23 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (41.5 x 59 cm). Amsterdam Historisch Museum, Amsterdam.

9.2-2 **Théodore Géricault**, *Study of Arm and Two Feet*, 1818–19. Oil on canvas, 20 x 25 $\frac{3}{16}$ " (52 x 64 cm). Musée Fabre, Montpellier.



beginning, in the lower left, with the tragic figure of the father mourning his dead son, and culminating, in the upper right, with the African who has raised himself on a wine barrel to alert the crew of the distant ship. The diagonal marks not only a physical and emotional crescendo, but also an existential journey from death to life and a moral revival from despair to hope.

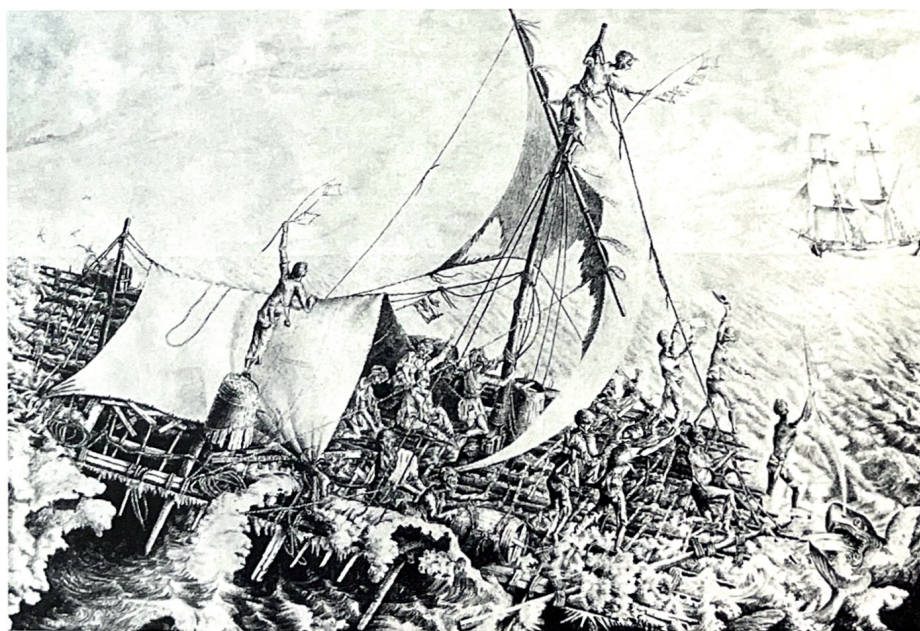
When we compare Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* with one of the popular images of the event (FIG. 9-11), we notice immediately that the artist has drastically reduced the size of the raft (Géricault's raft could never have accommodated 150 people) in order to achieve the dramatic diagonal massing of the figures. We also notice that Géricault has shown several survivors completely nude. In so doing he has given them a timeless quality not unlike the historical, mythological, and allegorical figures in Neo-classical works. However, much as we are tempted to see them as allegories—of life, of death, or suffering—we are prevented from doing so by the intrusion of realistic details: the white cotton socks of the dead young man, for example, or his father's sailor pants.

The Raft of the Medusa was exhibited at the Salon of 1819, where it had a mixed reception. Most critics did not know what to make of a work so unlike traditional Salon paintings. Moreover, many were loth to praise it because they realized that the painting had a subversive political message. Reluctant to roll up and store a work in which he had invested so much time, money, and energy, Géricault decided to take it to Britain. Here he hoped to follow the example of Benjamin West (*The Death of General Wolfe*; see FIG. 3-18) and John Singleton Copley (*The Death of the Earl of Chatham*; see FIG. 3-19) by showing his painting to the public for a fee. In London he found a professional exhibition organizer who agreed to show the painting in

exchange for two-thirds of the box office proceeds. For six-and-a-half months, the painting was shown in the "Egyptian Hall" in Piccadilly, where its sensational subject drew large crowds. It was then shipped to Dublin in Ireland and exhibited for another six weeks.

All this time Géricault stayed in London, where he became fascinated with the city's street life. In addition to painting the famous Derby horse race at nearby Epsom, he produced an album of prints on London themes, for which he felt there might be a market both in Britain and in France. Choosing the new print medium of lithography (see *Lithography*, page 215), he made twelve prints, which he published in 1821 as *Various Subjects Drawn from Life and on Stone. Pity the Sorrows of a Poor Old Man* (FIG. 9-12) is one of these. It shows an old beggar seated outside a bakery shop, trying to assuage his hunger with the smells of freshly baked bread. These works differ greatly from Géricault's large-scale Salon paintings. Meant for a middle-class public, they depict genre subjects, which had always appealed to that class. Yet, just as *The Raft of the Medusa* brings something new to history painting, so these lithographs bring something to genre painting. Compared with the works of Hogarth or Chardin in the eighteenth century, they neither tell a story nor sentimentalize their subjects. Instead, they depict their subjects with an uncompromising realism that foreshadows the Realist movement of the mid-nineteenth century. These prints show Stendhal's "men of today" in the ordinary circumstances of daily life. Moreover, by focusing on the miserable lives of the urban poor, Géricault has elicited, in Stendhal's words, "some human emotion or spiritual impulse in a vivid manner intelligible to the general public."

The realism of Géricault's lithographs is also seen in several late works, done between December 1821 and



9-11 **Anonymous**, *Raft of the Medusa*, 1818. Lithograph. Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris.



9-12 **Théodore Géricault**, *Pity the Sorrows of a Poor Old Man*, 1821. Lithograph, 12⁷/₁₆ x 14³/₄" (31.5 x 37.5 cm). British Museum, London.

Lithography

In 1799 a German inventor by the name of Aloys Senefelder (1771–1834) patented a new printing process. Soon to be called lithography (from the Greek word for stone), it was based on the phenomenon that grease repels water.

Lithography is a complex process. Basically, to make a lithograph, an artist draws with a greasy ink or crayon on the smoothly polished surface of a porous stone. The artist next applies a greasy painter's ink to the stone with a roller. The ink will adhere to the drawn lines but not to the wet surface of the stone. A piece of paper is placed on the stone and carefully rubbed down. The image drawn on the stone will be printed accurately in reverse on the paper. By re-inking the stone, the printing can be repeated numerous times, allowing the artist to "pull" multiple prints from the stone.

Although originally applied to the printing of sheet music, lithography soon became the domain of fine artists. The technique was refined to enable artists to draw on paper and transfer their drawings to the stone, to make better impressions with the help of a newly developed lithographic press, and to print in more than one color. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was possible to print large, poster-size lithographs in a wide range of colors.

the artist's death in 1824. Most important among them are five portraits of monomaniacs, the only ones remaining of an original series of ten. The series was owned at one time by Dr Etienne-Jean Georget, a Parisian psychiatrist, but it was probably commissioned by his colleague Jean-Etienne-Dominique Esquirol, who first diagnosed and treated monomania. Psychiatry was a new field in the early nineteenth century, when, for the first time, madness was seen as a mental illness and the insane as human beings who should be treated with compassion. Based on the ideas of Kaspar Lavater (see pages 83 and 248), many psychiatrists believed that there was a direct correlation between mental illness and physiognomy, so that the study of the patient's facial structure played an important role in the diagnosis and classification of mental diseases.

Géricault's portraits of monomaniacs may be related to this theory. According to Georget's annotations, the men and women shown in the portraits suffered from different types of delusions. *Man Suffering from Delusions of Military Rank* (FIG. 9-13) is perhaps the most striking of the five. An old man with sunken cheeks and gray stubble wears a hat with a red tassel, vaguely resembling a Napoleonic military hat. A blanket is draped over one shoulder, and around his neck he wears a large pierced coin as if it were a medal of honor. Besides the strange outfit, his facial expression also hints at the sitter's delu-



9-13 **Théodore Géricault**, *Man Suffering from Delusions of Military Rank*, 1819–22. Oil on canvas, 32 x 26" (82.5 x 66 cm). Collection Oskar Reinhart "Am Römerholz," Winterthur, Switzerland.

sional state. The shifty eyes, avoiding the viewer, and the fiercely pursed lips show the impossibility of communicating with this person, whose mind seems to have wandered off into an unknown realm. The contrast between the illuminated left half of the face and the deeply shaded right half seems to suggest that, although we can study the appearance of those who suffer this mental illness, our understanding is limited as we can never truly penetrate the dark recesses of their minds. Theirs is a mysterious world set apart from our own.

Esquirol considered monomania as a reflection of the socio-political conditions of the time, just as he saw the insane asylum as a mirror of contemporary culture. In this context, *Man Suffering from Delusions of Military Rank* seems particularly significant. Painted some five years after the

fall of Napoleon, it may reflect the sense of impotence of the post-Napoleonic generation, which felt itself to be excluded from its predecessor's military glory.

Eugène Delacroix

While Vernet and Géricault were engaged with reality and the present, Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) preferred the past, the fictional, and the exotic. The artist made his debut at the Salon of 1822 with *Dante and Virgil* (FIG. 9-14). Inspired by the *Divine Comedy*, an epic poem by Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), it shows the author and his guide, the Roman poet Virgil, traveling through hell and purgatory. In this scene, the two poets are ferried across a



9-14 **Eugène Delacroix**, *Dante and Virgil*, 1822. Oil on canvas, 62" x 7'11" (1.88 x 2.41 m). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

lake in which damned souls are punished by eternal drowning. The spectacle of the souls (represented, as custom dictates, by naked human figures) desperately clinging to the boat and vainly struggling to climb on board, arouses a mixture of horror and disdain in the three figures inside the vessel. While the boatman rows furiously across the lake, both Dante and Virgil have risen and silently watch the gruesome spectacle.

Although Delacroix was, no doubt, inspired by Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* in his use of nude male bodies as vehicles of pathos and suffering, he departed from that work in a decisive manner. By choosing a subject from literary history, he asserted that the present offered few subjects of interest to him. Delacroix felt that nineteenth-century France was bland and ugly. He complained about the "wretchedness of the modern costume," and the lack of poetry in modern life. To him, art and poetry "live[d] on fiction," by which he meant that they must have an element of fantasy. The present, which stood right before the artist's eyes, did not offer enough space for imagination.

In contrast to David and his followers, Delacroix felt that Classical literature and Classical art failed "to awaken

that part of the imagination which the moderns [i.e., post-Classical artists] excite in so many ways." He sought his subjects in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and beyond, preferring to approach these periods through the eyes of the poet. He turned to historical writers such as Dante, Cervantes, Milton, and Shakespeare, as well as modern authors of historical drama and fiction such as Goethe, Byron (see page 220), and Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832).

While *Dante and Virgil* was generally praised, Delacroix's next major work, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* (FIG. 9-15), became one of the most contested paintings of the 1824 Salon. It was criticized both for its formal qualities and for its emphasis on agony and suffering. One of Delacroix's rare paintings on a contemporary theme, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* showed an episode in the war waged by the Greeks in 1821 to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire. In the second year of this war, Ottoman Turks raided the island of Chios and burned most of its villages. Reportedly, some thirty thousand islanders were killed and thousands more were deported and enslaved. (The Greeks, one year earlier, had massacred a comparable number of Turks in Tripolis, an event that went largely



9-15 **Eugène Delacroix**, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, 1824. Oil on canvas, 13'8" x 11'7" (4.17 x 3.54 m). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

unnoticed in the West.) Like many artists and intellectuals in western Europe, Delacroix had a passionate interest in the Greek War of Independence, which resonated with early nineteenth-century ideals of freedom and nationalism. The Chios massacre left him shocked and outraged.

His painting shows a group of Greek prisoners huddled under the watchful eye of a Turkish soldier. An Ottoman officer, mounted on a white stallion, abducts a half-naked woman, while another tries to hold him back. The prisoners form a random group of young and old, naked and



9-16 **Eugène Delacroix**, Study for *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, 1824. Watercolor and pencil on paper, 13³/₈ x 11¹/₁₆" (34 x 30 cm). Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, Paris.

clothed. They cling to one another in despair, since they suspect that they are about to be separated forever.

Like Gros's *Plague House of Jaffa* and Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (both of which the young Delacroix is known to have admired), *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* shows a group of victims, but there is an important difference. While Gros's victims are redeemed by the heroism of their commander and while Géricault's painting, despite its horror, still carries a message of hope, Delacroix's painting is unapologetically pessimistic. This shocking depiction of horror deterred many critics. Even to Stendhal, otherwise open to innovation, the painting erred "on the side of excess."

Other critics objected, equally strongly, to the painting's form. *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* seemed to lack unity and focus, with figures randomly placed, without any organizing principle to their grouping. Conservative critics also objected to the painting's brushwork and color, although some of the more open-minded ones, in fact, saw in them Delacroix's most important innovation. Stendhal, for example, who "with the best will in the world," could not admire "Monsieur Delacroix and his *Massacres at Chios*" acknowledged that Delacroix had "a feeling for color," which, as he said, "in this century of draftsmen is saying a lot."

When looking at the painting today, it is hard to take Stendhal's remark seriously because *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios* seems so dark and muddy. This may not always have been the case, however. The painting, like many of the period, has deteriorated over time, owing to the use

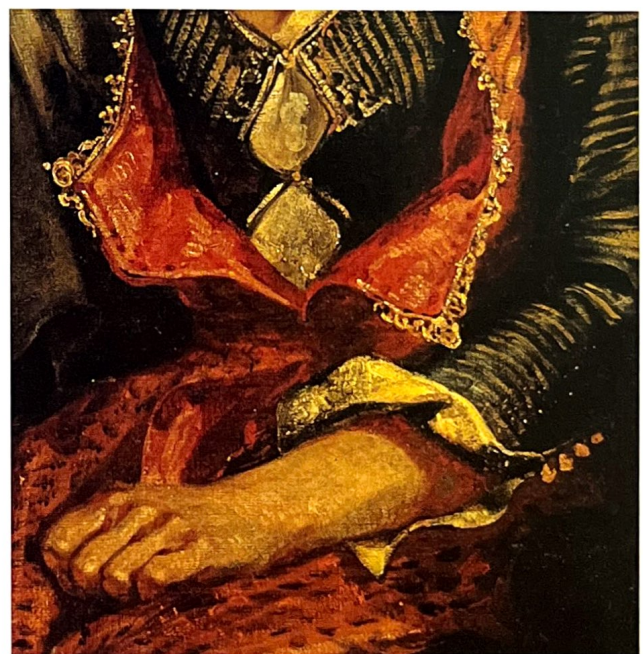
of poor materials. From the late eighteenth century, artists no longer made their own paints but bought commercially fabricated colors. By the early nineteenth century, the standards for commercial paints had sunk so low that many paintings of the period were unfit to stand the test of time. Today they look much darker than intended, and the paint surface is frequently cracked.

To imagine what *Massacres at Chios* may originally have looked like, or at least, what coloristic effects Delacroix had in mind, it is useful to look at a preliminary watercolor study (FIG. 9-16). Here we see not only rich colors and striking color contrasts (for example, the use of the three primary colors, yellow, red, and blue, in the dress of the mounted Turk), but we also notice that Delacroix was in the habit of "sketching" with colors. In other words, he did not first draw the figures in pencil and then fill in the tints, but conceived the entire image in terms of color patches.

The finished painting, too, was sketched in large flat color masses, which were subsequently enlivened with small touches of paint to suggest light and shade and surface particularities. A detail of the painting showing the old woman's arm (FIG. 9-17) demonstrates Delacroix's technique. While the arm itself is painted in a beige flesh tone, the shadow cast on it is loosely painted in red, with an occasional touch of its complementary, green. This is quite different from the way a cast shadow was painted by, for example, Ingres. A look at the sitter's arm in the *Portrait of Madame La Rivière* (see FIG. 5-34), for example, shows that Ingres, and the Classicists in general, showed light and shade by mixing white or black with the basic flesh color of the arm.

Innovative as Delacroix's brushwork and use of color may seem, it was not without precedent. Already in the

9-17 **Eugène Delacroix**, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*. Detail of FIG. 9-15.





9-18 **Eugène Delacroix**, *The Death of Sardanapalus*, 1827–8. Oil on canvas, 13' x 16'3" (3.95 x 4.95 m). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, artists such as Paolo Veronese in Italy and Rubens in Flanders had used similar coloristic effects. In his own time, Delacroix's free brushwork was attributed to his knowledge of the work of Constable, whose *The Hay Wain* (see FIG. 8-19) was exhibited at the Salon of 1824.

Scenes from the Massacres at Chios may be seen as Delacroix's first Orientalist work, both for its representation of Ottomans (complete with turbans and scimitars) riding fiery horses, and for its emphasis on savagery. To depict this imagined scene of mass execution and enslavement, Delacroix broke with traditional rules of composition, paint application, and use of color, causing the artist Gros to refer to the work as the "massacre of painting."

Orientalism found full expression in Delacroix's next major painting, *The Death of Sardanapalus* (FIG. 9-18), which was exhibited at the Salon of 1827–8. This colossal work, measuring some 13 feet by 16, was inspired by a recent play by the British Romantic poet George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824). Byron's poetic drama *Sardanapalus*

(1821), perhaps a veiled political commentary on the British monarchy, tells the story of an ancient Assyrian king whose decadent lifestyle and unwillingness to govern invite rebellion. To spite the rebels, who are about to overrun his palace, the king orders its total destruction. According to Delacroix's own "storyboard" for the picture (as published in the Salon catalogue):

The rebels besiege him in his palace . . . Reclined on a superb bed, above an immense funeral pyre, Sardanapalus orders his eunuchs and palace officers to slaughter his wives, his pages, even his favorite horses and dogs; none of these objects which had served his pleasure was to survive him . . . Aischeh, a Bactrian woman, did not wish to suffer a slave to kill her, and hung herself from the columns supporting the vault . . . Baleah [on the right], cupbearer of Sardanapalus, at last set fire to the funeral pyre and threw himself upon it.

Delacroix's painting is composed along a sweeping diagonal line from upper left to lower right. At the top, a white-clad Sardanapalus reclines on an enormous red bed, decorated with golden elephant heads. Morosely he watches as servants bring in his treasures—golden vessels, jewelry, clothing, horses, and women, to be destroyed or killed before his eyes. If paintings could make a sound, this one would be filled with screams, shouts, the neighing of horses, and the clanging of metal pots; if they gave off scent, it would reek of sweat, blood, and fire. Visually, the painting is a delirious mass of bodies, painted in hot, feverish colors, but the sensual pleasure one derives from it can only be sadistic.

To the contemporary viewer, *The Death of Sardanapalus* exemplifies Romanticism in its Orientalist thematics and sublime horror, as well as in its dynamic composition, free brushwork, and explosive colors. The painting seems an emphatic response to the call of Stendhal for an emotionally charged art. Yet, in the 1820s, this painting, in its "Satanism," was too much even for this Romantic writer, let alone for more conservative critics, who blamed Delacroix for an imagination gone awry. The critic Auguste Jal perhaps best expressed the mixture of attraction and repulsion Delacroix's contemporaries felt in front of this painting:

Monsieur Delacroix . . . has painted his *Sardanapalus* with all his heart; he has given himself to it with passion, with feeling, and unfortunately, in the delirium of his creation, he has been carried away beyond all limits . . . He wanted to compose disorder, and he forgot that disorder itself has a logic; he wanted to appall us with the spectacle of the barbaric pleasures on which the eyes of Sardanapalus sated himself before closing for ever. But it is impossible for a rational mind to extricate itself from the chaos amidst which this idea is confined.

Ingres and the Transformation of Classicism

The Classical tradition itself, however, did not remain unchanged. During the Restoration period, its transformation, which had already begun during the Empire (see page 116), went apace with the progress of Romanticism. And it is seen even in the work of an artist who was considered in his time to be the embodiment of academic painting, David's student Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867).

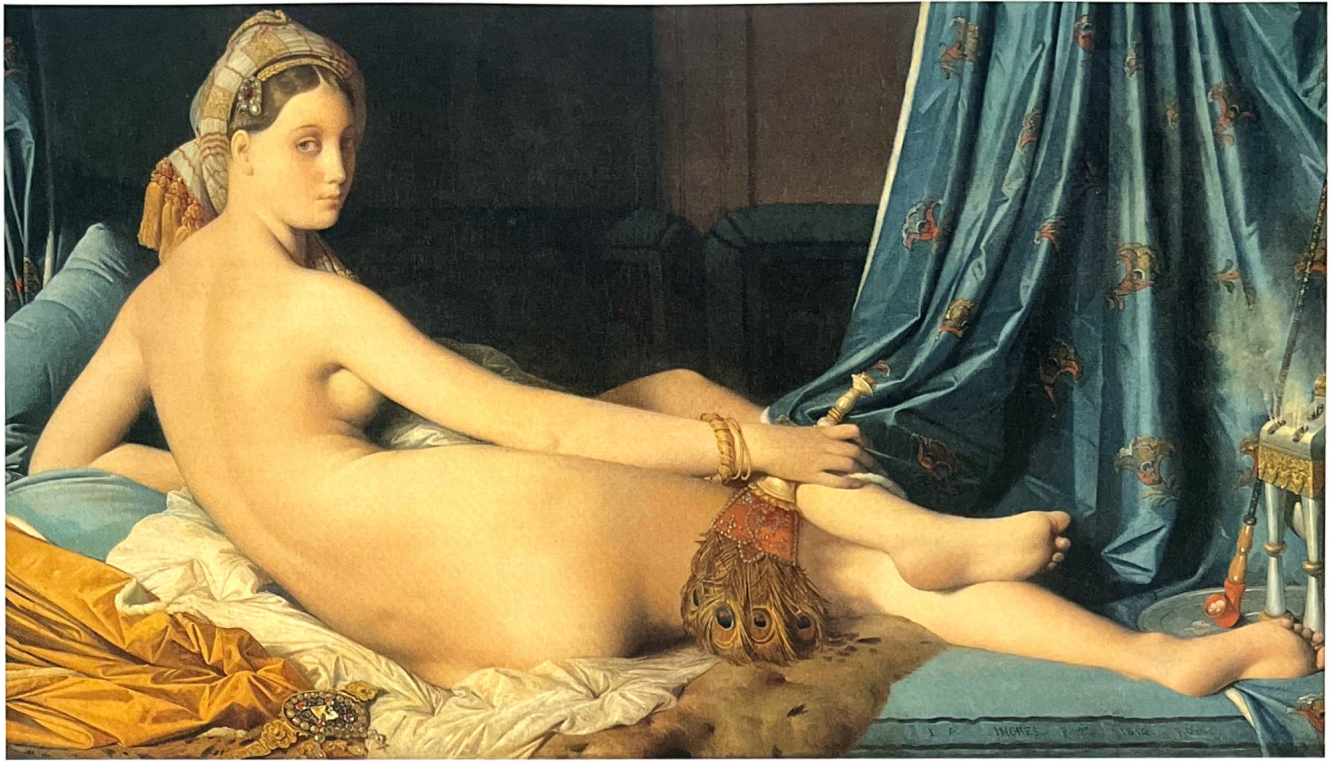
The Salon of 1824 not only saw the triumph of the young Romantics, notably of Vernet and Delacroix; it also marked the first official recognition of Ingres. After exhibiting *Napoleon on his Imperial Throne* (see FIG. 5-17) at the Salon of 1806, the artist had left for Italy as a recipient of the Rome Prize. During his four-year residency in Rome, he had dutifully sent back the obligatory *envois* to Paris. He had also made important connections in Rome, which,

owing to Napoleon's occupation of Italy, was crowded with Frenchmen. In 1811 he received a commission for two paintings to decorate Napoleon's residence in Rome, the Palazzo Quirinale. He had also received commissions for two paintings of female nudes from Napoleon's sister Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples. And he had built quite a portrait clientele among French expatriates in Rome.

In Paris, however, Ingres was little known. The artist had been reluctant to send works to the Salon since his *Napoleon on his Imperial Throne* and his portraits of the Rivière family (exhibited before his departure for Rome in 1806) had been criticized as Gothic and perverse. He exhibited three small paintings at the Salon of 1814, but they attracted little notice. In 1819 he submitted three further paintings, which met with a mixture of indifference and hostility. Most of this hostility was directed at the *Grande Odalisque* (FIG. 9-19), one of the two nudes that Ingres had painted for Caroline Murat in 1814. A picture of a nude, reclining harem woman (the French word *odalisque* comes from the Turkish *odalik*), it was a work of shocking originality. The *Grande Odalisque* was unprecedented in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century painting in that it represented a nude outside a narrative context. Unlike Girodet's *Danaë* (see FIG. 5-27), which could be readily inserted into the mythological narrative of one of Zeus' famous escapades, the *Odalisque* was nothing more nor less than a naked woman on display. To be sure, "display nudes," such as the so-called *Venus of Urbino* (see FIG. 12-36), by Titian, had been produced before. But those paintings had been executed for private patrons. Ingres's *Grande Odalisque*, by contrast was exhibited in the Salon, where her nakedness was accessible to the public at large.

The shocking implications of Ingres's choice of subject matter (only prostitutes showed off their naked bodies) were mitigated by the artist's insistence, through the title and the woman's paraphernalia, that his nude was not a French woman but an "oriental" harem woman. For the visitors to the Salon, therefore, she was not "one of us," but "the other," a woman belonging to an exotic world where Western rules of decorum did not apply.

Yet it was not only the content but also the form of Ingres's painting that unsettled many visitors to the Salon. For while it retained some aspects of Davidian Classicism, most notably the emphasis on contour, it also marked a departure from that style. No one could fail to notice that the luscious curvature of the back was achieved at the expense of an unnatural elongation of the spine (critics complained that at least three vertebrae had been added). In addition, the smooth, sensuous contour of arms and legs was the result of the virtual elimination of joints. Ingres had taken the Classicist idea of line as an artistic means to purify reality beyond the traditional boundaries. To the Classicists, purification of reality had not meant departure from reality. To Ingres, however, his was a justifiable attempt to bring out the essence of the subject: if the mark of the



9-19 **Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres**, *Grande Odalisque*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 35⁷/₈ x 63" (91 cm x 1.62 m). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

9-20 **Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres**, *The Vow of Louis XIII*, Salon of 1824. Oil on canvas, 13'9" x 8'8" (4.21 x 2.65 m). Montauban Cathedral.

harem woman was her sensuality, then line and contour could and should be used to express that. Or, as Ingres himself is reported to have told his students: "Drawing does not simply consist of reproducing the contours; drawing does not simply consist of line; drawing is, above all, expression, interior form, concept, modeling."

As in Ingres's earlier *Portrait of Madame Rivière*, the daring distortion of contour is counteracted by the almost photographic verisimilitude of details and surface textures. From the pearls in the *Odalisque's* hair to the peacock feather fan in her hand, from the smooth texture of her flesh to the rich shimmering of the background curtain, all the details appear so real that one can nearly overlook the picture's "incorrectnesses."

The criticism that was leveled at the *Grande Odalisque* in 1819 prevented Ingres from showing at the next few Salons. It was not until 1824 that he found the courage to submit his work again, this time showing seven paintings. Most important among them was a large-scale painting destined for the cathedral in his home town of Montauban (FIG. 9-20). Commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior, it represented an event in 1634, when Louis XIII, in a sacred vow, consecrated France and his crown to the Virgin, on the day commemorating her Assumption. It was a difficult subject to represent, since it required the combination of a historical figure (Louis XIII) with a supernatural event—





9-21 **Raphael**, *The Madonna of Foligno*, 1511–12. Oil on canvas transferred from panel, 10'6" x 6'4" (3.2 x 1.94 m). Vatican Museum, Rome.

the entrance of the Virgin into heaven. Ingres chose to represent the scene as a vision, in which Louis XIII beholds the Virgin and Child seated on a cloud. That this is, indeed, a revelation is shown by the two angels on the side who part the curtains to "reveal" the Virgin to the king.

The Vow of Louis XIII is, at first glance, a conservative painting that may be seen as a homage to—or an attempt to improve on—Ingres's favorite artist, the Renaissance

painter Raphael. His *Virgin with Child* is an amalgam of Raphael's two most popular Madonnas, the *Sistine Madonna* in the Painting Gallery in Dresden (see FIG. 7-10) and the so-called *Madonna of Foligno* in the Vatican (FIG. 9-21). But Ingres has given the Virgin his own personal stamp. Her face has been smoothed and streamlined, lending it a remote sensuality. Indeed, as Stendhal remarked in his review of the Salon: "The Madonna is beautiful enough, but it is a physical kind of beauty, incompatible with the idea of divinity. This is a psychological, not a technical defect."

To conservative critics, however, Ingres's painting embodied a Classical tradition of perfect beauty that was the more precious since it seemed under attack from the side of such "heretics" as Vernet and Delacroix. Little wonder, then, that Ingres emerged triumphantly from the Salon. Within a few months of its closure, he was elected a member of the Academy and awarded a Legion of Honor cross. Ingres's success in Paris had finally come. His newly opened studio attracted more than a hundred students.

Classicism and Romanticism

The Restoration period is commonly seen as a period that marks the beginning of a split in art between Classicism and Romanticism, whereby the first represents the status quo in art—the official style promoted by the Academy and taught in the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*—and the second the *avant-garde*. Classicism and Romanticism, in this view, represent two contrary trends—one conservative and orthodox, the other progressive and modern.

While there is truth in this model, it has, like all historical models, its weakness. Ingres, the great protagonist of Classicism, is conservative only to a point. As a youth he rebelled against David, and his mature works are quite removed from the art of David and his followers, both in subject matter and technique. By the same token, Delacroix, who we see as the great protagonist of Romanticism, saw himself as a Classicist, an artist working in the great traditions of the history of art.