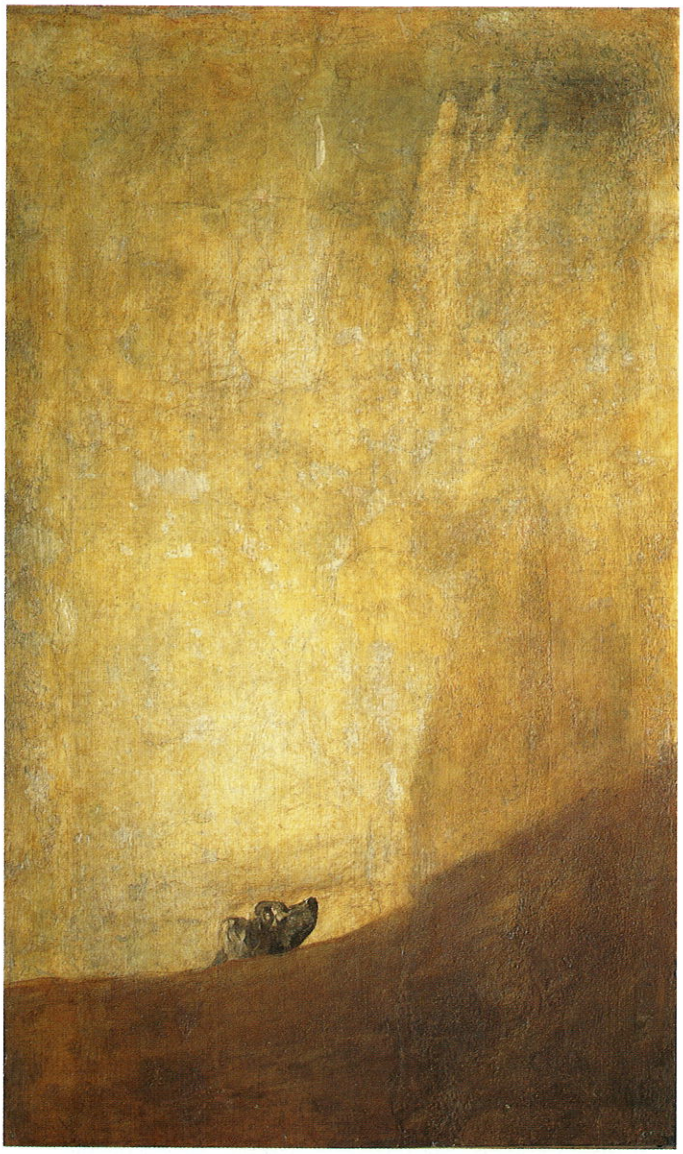

Fig. 111 **Francisco de Goya y Lucientes**, *A Dog*, 1820–23. Mural transferred to canvas, 53½ × 32″. Prado, Madrid.

Caprichos, and in the work of Géricault, who had just died before his thirty-third birthday, Goya might well have found in Paris two French painters who continued to explore those experiences of both the mundane and the irrational that were concealed behind the smug and conservative facades of the newly restored monarchies of Spain and France.

Théodore Géricault

No French painter who inherited the great traditions of David and the old masters so completely subverted their human and political messages as did Théodore Géricault (1791–1824). Thoroughly steeped in both the Neoclassical world of his teacher, Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, and in the grand images of those masters, from Titian to Rembrandt, whose works he copied at the Louvre, he early had at his command a resonant framework of grand-scale figural and landscape compositions. But by the end of the Napoleonic era, when one ideal after another was toppling, the conventional themes of these old masters could appear strangely out of joint with the disillusioning realities of modern experience. Géricault soon searched for, and found, a new kind of subject matter that usurped the place of Christ, of Hector, of Napoleon with anonymous figures culled from daily life, and that replaced the domain of reason and morality with a trip to human hells where, among his contemporaries, perhaps Goya alone would be no stranger.

Géricault's disruption of existing hierarchies can already be seen in a large panel painting of about 1814 which was intended to be nothing more important than the signboard of a nameless blacksmith (**fig. 112**). But instead of a predictably humble image of a common worker about to shoe a horse, we find a heroic descendant of a noble Western pedigree. Inevitably, such recent historical memories as David's own *Napoleon at St.-Bernard* (see fig. 22) are recalled in the dramatic interplay of a passionately rearing animal constrained by the tautest human discipline of mind and body. But the icy precision of David's art is suddenly thawed here in a molten brushwork that resurrects the traditions of Rubens. The paint itself has a creamy, agitated density that bestows upon everything—the horse's flowing mane and tail as well as the blacksmith's rolled-up shirt sleeves and open collar—an uncommonly vibrant warmth and vitality appropriate to a legendary theme. As for the grouping of horse and master, the linking in rhymed pairs of raised and lowered hooves and limbs dramatically silhouetted against the shed's simple arch conveys the ideal nobility of a long Western sculptural tradition of classical horse tamers. These might be found in Rome at the Quirinale, or in France, in the Baroque equestrian statues by Coysevox and Coustou that once decorated the seventeenth-century château at Marly and that, after 1795, reared up again in Géricault's Paris at the entrance to the Champs-Élysées.

But it is not only the replacing of Castor and Napoleon by a common worker that demands attention here. For one, the expression of the blacksmith is clouded by a strange mood, discernible in his furrowed brows and stunned gaze and echoed in the somber shadows that surround him. The horse itself rears with an alarming energy, his mane furiously windswept, his eyes bulging with unexplained excitement. From his youth, Géricault had been fascinated by horses (which, it should be recalled, were once as commonplace a sight in both city and country as automobiles would become in the twentieth century); and, like Gros before him, he often sensed in them a vehement strength that could become a metaphor for a suppressed human

Fig. 112 **Théodore Géricault**, *The Blacksmith's Signboard*, 1814. Oil on wood, 49¾ × 41″. Kunsthaus, Zurich.

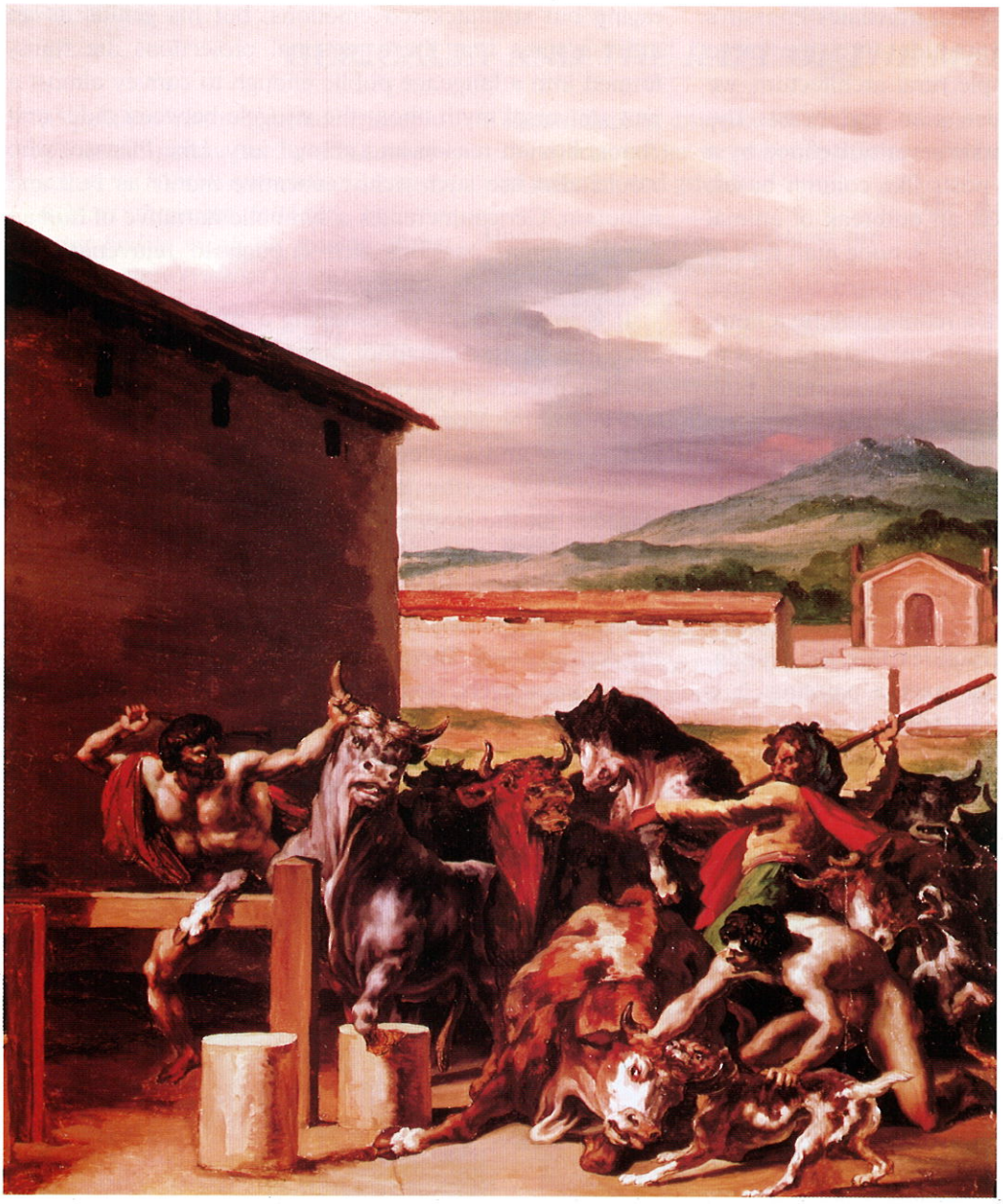

Fig. 113 **Théodore Géricault**, *The Bull Market*, 1817–18. Oil on paper, pasted on canvas, 22¼ × 19″. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

potential. The blacksmith's horse is one of this Romantic breed, enlisting the spectator's emotions as it surges upward with the kind of passion formerly reserved for the heroic equestrian conflicts of Napoleonic battles or mythological hunts.

For Géricault, as for many other members of a disillusioned generation that had experienced the eclipse of Napoleon, a turbulent cargo of homeless emotions and grand pictorial rhetoric had to be discharged in unfamiliar subjects. During a year's sojourn in Italy, between 1816 and 1817, he not only studied the work of Raphael, Michelangelo, and antique sculptors, as so many French painters had done before him, but absorbed such experiences of contemporary Roman life as the thrilling annual Carnival race of Barbary horses, a scene of literally unbridled passion in which riderless horses thundered down the Corso, not to mention the more prosaic sights of Italian butchers and herdsmen. From these observations, he was inspired to dream of dramatizing such themes in vast canvases that might rival those of the Salons. Although he never fully realized these grandiose schemes, he did execute, both in Italy and after his return to France, small but heroically scaled paintings that articulated his ideas.

In one of these, *The Bull Market* of 1817–18 (**fig. 113**), Géricault telescoped a number of actual and fictional experiences, ranging from his observations of slaughterhouses in Rome and Paris to memories of mythological subjects that deal with the sacrifice of bulls. From these multiple sources, alternately brutal and heroic, classical and contemporary, Géricault fused an astonishing new whole, which translates the prosaic realities of butchers and cattle into a private poetry of such uncanny passion that we begin to read it as a symbolic drama from the domain of Hercules or Mithras, or perhaps even of Freud.

Against a Mediterranean setting that translates Poussin's vistas of a Greco-Roman countryside into the more common language of starkly simple rural architecture, we see a passionate struggle between man and beast. The stockyard is of an almost Neoclassic severity, defined by a rectilinear fence and cylindrical posts like column bases; but within these rational confines, an outbreak of animal energies erupts with volcanic violence. A nude man tries to separate a biting dog from a bull that has gotten out of line; another figure, half-draped, seizes a rearing bull by a horn; and still another figure, in colorful peasant costume, tries to control a bull which seems to be mounting another bull. But throughout, a rigorous structural discipline is imposed. With Davidian clarity, both figures and animals are pruned to essentials, their forces of rebellion and repression tautly locked in place. Similarly, the inclusion of nude and near-nude figures contributes to the evocation of a world that appears to have inherited the ideal language of a timeless classical tradition. Yet this lucid environment is now threatened by such irrational, brutal emotions that the equilibrium is feverishly strained. Before such a painting, it is difficult to avoid speculating on the degree to which Géricault's tormented amorous biography is reflected in these raging but straitjacketed emotions; but his genius as an artist assures that these personal projections are transformed into a language public enough to convey almost a new universal myth about the struggle between order and chaos, human reason and animal fury. Like Picasso, who would also use such richly evocative motifs as bull and minotaur, Géricault creates a symbolic narrative of human versus animal passions rich enough to rejuvenate the myths and legends of the past.

It is this capacity of reshaping a contemporary experience into an epic metaphor that helps to explain the enormous achievement of Géricault's most ambitious painting, *The Raft of the Medusa* (fig. 114). To be sure, many artists from West and Copley to David and Goya had already painted newsworthy events in the language of heroic tragedy, but the story here was of a different kind, one of scandal and horror rather than patriotic sacrifice. On July 2, 1816, a French frigate, the *Medusa*, carrying soldiers and settlers to the colony of Senegal, was wrecked on a reef off the African coast. The six lifeboats were inadequate to hold all the passengers, and three days later, one hundred and fifty people, including a woman, were left behind, forced to face a grim destiny on a jerry-built wooden raft. Two of the

Fig. 114 **Théodore Géricault**, *The Raft of the Medusa*, Salon of 1819. Oil on canvas, 16′ 1″ × 23′ 6″. Louvre, Paris.

GÉRICAULT AND *THE RAFT OF THE MEDUSA*

A political furore greeted Théodore Géricault's picture (see fig. 114), which covers the horrible aftermath of a French frigate's shipwreck in 1816. But the artist had to weigh his reading of the documentary evidence against the need to focus his pictorial theme. At times, the survivors' accounts were made to yield to the need for visual drama.

The Medusa's *surgeon described the painting's moment of drama:*

> Captain Dupont, casting his eye towards the horizon, perceived a ship, and announced it to us by a cry of joy: we perceived it to be a brig, but it was at a very great distance; we could only distinguish the top of its masts. The sight of this vessel spread amongst us a joy which it would be difficult to describe. Fears, however, soon mixed with our hopes; we began to perceive that our raft, having very little elevation above water, it was impossible to distinguish it at such a distance. We did all we could to make ourselves observed; we piled up our casks, at the top of which we fixed handkerchiefs of different colours. Unfortunately, in spite of all these signals, the brig disappeared. From the delirium of joy we passed to that of dejection and grief.[24]

Miraculously, the brig reappeared two hours later. But Géricault took liberties with the appearance of the scene at the moment of rescue, as the modern art historian Lorenz Eitner has shown:

> He had probably never intended to show the raft and the men on it as they actually appeared at the time of the rescue: the raft littered with strips of dried human flesh, the men emaciated, with matted hair and tangled beards, their bodies covered with wounds. Contemporary prints ... represented the raft in this way, but at no point in his work did he imitate their literalism. From first to last he gave his figures, the living and the dead, the appearance of athletes in vigorous health. His concern with the reality of the event centred throughout on what he regarded as its essential drama. To treat the scene in its detail of rags, wounds and haggard flesh would have meant giving it a picturesque-ness which was not part of his plan—he wanted to paint history, not inflated genre.[25]

The public response to the painting differed depending on the politics of the beholder. Géricault was clearly angered by the slur of one right-wing journalist:

> This year, our journalists have reached the heights of ridicule. They judge every painting according to the spirit in which it was composed. You will find a liberal article praising some work for its truly patriotic brush, its national stroke. The same work, judged by a rigorous conservative, turns out to be nothing less than a revolutionary composition, pervaded by a general tint of sedition ... I have been accused by a certain *Drapeau blanc* [an Ultra-Royalist paper] of having slandered the entire Ministry of the Navy by the expression of one of the heads in my picture. The wretches who write such nonsense have certainly never gone without food for two weeks on end, otherwise they would realize that neither poetry nor painting can ever do justice to the horror and anguish of the men on the Raft.[26]

fifteen survivors—an engineer, Alexandre Corréard, and a surgeon, Henri Savigny—published an account of the nightmare that followed, a period of thirteen days on a floating coffin, where insanity, mutiny, mutilation, famine, thirst, and cannibalism became commonplace. Compelling in itself as a true story of hell on earth, the narrative record was also political dynamite; for the captain of the *Medusa* was an incompetent seaman of noble birth, whose appointment depended on his connections with the Bourbon Restoration government, and whose haste to save himself and other senior officers while abandoning the lower ranks to the raft was a shocking indictment of aristocratic privilege. The story grew to scandalous proportions both in France and abroad, and quickly captured Géricault's imagination. Here was an event that turned upside down the Revolutionary and Napoleonic heritage of reason and of the nobility of death, and one that could expose the darkest side of human suffering.

In dozens of drawings and painted sketches, Géricault plotted out the huge canvas, whose subject, he finally decided, should be the excruciatingly tense moment when, on the thirteenth day, July 17, the survivors sighted the brig *Argus*, a speck on the horizon, and frantically signaled it. (The rescue ship, in fact, disappeared, but then miraculously turned up again two hours later.) And even more than his predecessors in the painting of contemporary history, Géricault worked feverishly, like a journalist with a deadline, taking a trip to the Normandy coast to study the movement of water, arranging to have constructed in his studio a model of the raft with wax figures upon it, visiting hospitals and morgues to scrutinize the ravages of illness and death. But this accumulation of documentary details is completely absorbed in an epic construction of five corpses and fifteen survivors, who take their places in a desperate pyramid that becomes the human counterpart to the triangular volume of makeshift mast and rigging at the left. If the lucid geometry of this taut chain of figures recalls the ideal order of the French classical tradition, so too does the ascending rhetoric of emotions, which begins in the watery foreground with a

macabre quartet of corpses and then continues in a communal rush of hope that reaches its apex in the African who vigorously signals the distant ship with a windswept cloth and who inevitably evokes a burning contemporary issue that Géricault, in fact, had contemplated as the subject of a painting: the slave trade, officially outlawed in France in 1815, but nevertheless continued in a clandestine manner. Yet this academic language of ideal order is constantly subverted by the horror of the subject, which explores the most irrational depths of human experience, and turns inside out its noble prototypes in history painting. Thus, the group of an aged mourner numbly contemplating the nude corpse of a youth echoes ironically the martyrdom of military heroes or of the Pietà itself, and even alludes to the well-known accounts of cannibalism aboard the raft, since the grouping recalls illustrations to Dante's gruesome tale of the starving, imprisoned Count Ugolino, whose sons offer him their own flesh. Like Copley's *Watson and the Shark* (see fig. 4), *The Raft of the Medusa* phrases a contemporary event in the language of tradition; but the eccentric drama of the earlier cliff-hanger is here aggrandized to epic dimensions that translate the monumental gloom of the Deluge and the Last Judgment into a secularized symbol of human despair, momentarily aroused by a remote glimmer of salvation.

At the Salon of 1819, the title of the painting was changed to *A Shipwreck Scene* in order to avoid the politically inflammatory reference to the specific disaster whose cause lay in royal Bourbon favoritism; but this topical censorship did not violate the metaphorical spirit of the painting, whose allegorical potential was so great that the historian Jules Michelet, on the eve of the 1848 Revolution, could interpret it as France drifting into the darkness of political conservatism, whereas others might see it as a universal symbol of human misery on the order of Goya's prisons and madhouses. By conferring tragic status upon anonymous victims rather than upon classical or modern military heroes, by demonstrating that the human potential of terror and chaos was more compelling than that of reason and order, Géricault set out to destroy the premises of Davidian traditions, while nevertheless working within their language of ideal form. Indeed, like Goya's *Third of May 1808* (see fig. 34), painted only five years before, *The Raft of the Medusa* extinguishes the Age of Enlightenment, revealing the dark and terrifying truths that lie below the layer of reason. And in terms of French history painting, *The Medusa* offers the fullest contradiction of David's epic veneration of human will and heroic action.

For all its grandiose ambition, rivaling David's canvases in their own terms, the painting was not a sensation at the

Fig. 115 **David Wilkie**, *Chelsea Pensioners Reading the Gazette of the Battle of Waterloo*, 1822. Oil on canvas, 36½ × 60½". Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

1819 Salon, and critics were perplexed by its newness, wondering who the hero was and in what public building it would be suitable for display. Disappointed by the response of the conservative Paris audience, Géricault welcomed the opportunity to have *The Raft of the Medusa* shown in London and Dublin in 1820–21 under the auspices of the kind of popular, commercial exhibition that Copley had arranged in the 1780s for his paintings of the dramatic deaths of Chatham and Peirson (see fig. 6). The gruesome and topical subject of *The Medusa* guaranteed its enormous commercial success in the British Isles, where it was viewed more as a morbid entertainment, like a wax museum's chamber of horrors, than as a landmark in the epic demise of Davidian painting. Accompanying his picture, Géricault spent almost two years in England, where new experiences of art and life affected him deeply. In the work of British painters, whose company he sought out, he found a startling alternative to the grand French tradition in which even corpses on a life raft smack of the ideal anatomies of Michelangelo and Raphael. He looked with intense interest at such works then in progress as *Chelsea Pensioners Reading the Gazette of the Battle of Waterloo* (**fig. 115**), by the Scotsman David Wilkie (1785–1841), who had made his early reputation painting Scottish peasants not in the heroic mode of Géricault's *Blacksmith* but rather in a humble manner whose pedigree stemmed from seventeenth-century Holland and Flanders. Commissioned by the Duke of Wellington himself, Wilkie's *Chelsea Pensioners* recorded the repercussions of his victory at Waterloo in 1815 as experienced by an amiable and anonymous crowd of London military veterans, with attendant families of women and children. Géricault was struck by how this picture was "like nature itself"; for the poignant human drama of the left-hand group of figures intently

Fig. 116 **Théodore Géricault**, *The Piper*, 1821. Lithograph, 12⅜ × 9⅛". Art Institute of Chicago.

searching the casualty list for the names of loved ones is in no way dramatized by, in his words, "fatally presaging lightnings," but seems rather a candid fragment of ordinary truths, in which terrible human pathos can be observed in an uneventful environment of pleasant skies, busy city streets, playful dogs, and cheerful holidaymakers. Such British paintings, with their rejection of French structural and dramatic rhetoric, helped to reveal to Géricault the possibilities of recording the most prosaic experiences in a simple, direct fashion.

The grime and poverty of early nineteenth-century London also arrested Géricault's attention, and he unpretentiously documented there the somber side of the modern city, whether the spectacle of a public hanging or of dray horses carrying their daily burdens under the Thamesside wharves. Working in the then new medium of lithography, whose thick and soft graphic patterns seemed appropriate to a melancholy aura of London fog and darkness, he published in 1821 a series of twelve prints, some of which, like *The Piper* (fig. 116), seem to seize for the first time th heartbreaking commonplaces of nineteenth-century urba misery. Isolated by the rubble of a brick wall, beyond whic we see a rooftop glimpse of slum dwellings, an impove ished old man plays his bagpipe for no visible audienc Were it not for his faithful pet dog, who seems as hop lessly inert as his master, he would be totally alone. Such pitiful record of an aged dweller amid the rapidly expan ing population of an industrialized city may belong, in pa to the candid insistence on "nature itself" that Géricau admired in Wilkie's work; but the Frenchman's genius f ennobling generalization is apparent even here, not only i the lucid, if dilapidated, architectural framework, but in th poignant dignity of the piper and dog themselves, wh viewed in calm profile, seem pathetic emblems of an outcast victims, whether in a legend like that of Belisariu (see fig. 15) or a modern world of grueling economic har ships. Géricault's grasp of the plight of the London urba poor was not rivaled until 1868, when another Frenchma

Fig. 117 **Théodore Géricault**, *Portrait of an Insane Man (Mania of Military Command)*, 1822–23. Oil on canvas, 32½ × 26". Collection Oskar Reinhart "Am Römerholz," Winterthur, Switzerland.

Gustave Doré, visited London and documented its industrial slums (see fig. 359).

After returning to Paris in December 1821, Géricault wavered between the pursuit of a more straightforward immediate record of empirical fact, bolstered by his English experience, and the more French, Salon-oriented goals of making epic canvases from such dramatic contemporary events as the horrors of the African slave trade. His vast new plans were never realized, but in his last months of activity, the winter of 1822–23, he was able to complete a series of ten unforgettable portraits of insane men and women, painted in association with a pioneer in the new field of psychiatry, the young Dr. Étienne Georget, who changed the treatment of the mentally ill from chains and jeering to a humane effort to understand the mysterious correlations between mind and body, especially as revealed in the disturbed physiognomies of his patients. It is not clear what practical function Géricault's paintings of these distressed countenances could have served—lecture demonstrations would be a better guess than textbook illustrations—but it may well be that, as in his earlier documentation of the dead and the dying from Paris morgues and hospitals, Géricault found through Dr. Georget yet another way to scrutinize the realm of human suffering. In one of the five extant portraits of these anonymous victims of mental disorder, a case described as an obsession with military command (**fig. 117**), the degree of Géricault's compassion and observation can be measured. Like Stubbs's recording with precision the zoological fact of a monkey (see fig. 37), Géricault also adheres to the intense truth of medical illustration. The patient's face, with its nervous yet severe gaze of mock authority, is so specific that we feel we could instantly single him out in a hospital ward. Yet these askew features, painted with an immediate, bravura swiftness that recalls the techniques of seventeenth-century Dutch realists such as Hals, are only the empirical component of documentary fact through which Géricault seems to explore, with the fullest empathy, a haunting domain of irrationality, in which an alienated soul, totally isolated against a dark, abstract ground, forces us to confront in the most individualized terms this frightening human potential. And for Géricault, this patient's particular delusion—military command—must have been especially ironic. The world of heroic Napoleonic officers, whose pictorial veneration before Waterloo was the breeding ground for Géricault's art, has now collapsed entirely in this pathetic charade of an old man wearing mock military gear—a black cap with a tassel and a medallion on a metal chain. Goya, who arrived in France only months after Géricault's death in January 1824, would have understood. He had already represented the madness of both asylums and battlefields, and, after 1824, he even made a series of sketches of different types of madmen. For both the younger and the older artist, the demon of irrationality had conquered.

Delacroix, Ingres, and the Romantic–Classic Conflict in France

Despite his premature death, Géricault left behind an enormous heritage for a younger generation. No artist seemed to put on his mantle more authoritatively than his junior by seven years Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), who, with his close contemporaries in literature and music, Victor Hugo and Hector Berlioz, became one of the great trinity of French Romantics to reign even beyond the mid-century mark. Given the fact that he had posed (face down) for the central corpse in *The Raft of the Medusa*, it was predictable that the shadow of that maritime disaster would fall across the painting with which Delacroix would make his Salon debut in 1822, *The Bark of Dante* (**fig. 118**). The scene plunges us into the labyrinthine horrors of Dante's *Inferno* (Canto VIII), which, from the late eighteenth century on, had become a fertile source for those artists who wished to explore imaginative worlds of uncommon mystery and passion. Ferried across a tumultuous lake by the muscular oarsman Phlegyas, Dante and his companion, Vergil, recoil in horror at the hellish sights that surround them. Clustered in the foreground, the shades of the damned writhe in eternal contortions that convey acute physical and emotional suffering; some even try savagely to tear at the bark with gnawing teeth or grasping arms. At the left, the ever-blazing fires of the infernal city of Dis can be seen, casting their fearful light across the murky depths of hell. Throughout, this image of humanity reduced to animal desperation in an overwhelmingly malevolent environment echoes *The Medusa*; but Delacroix's originality is no less apparent. The choice of a literary text from the late Middle Ages rather than the journalistic truth of a contemporary shipwreck already marks Delacroix's preference for seeking inspiration from the highest flights of authors as diverse as Dante and Shakespeare, Goethe and Byron. Here, the rectilinear, almost Davidian tautness of *The Medusa* yields to churning, rounded rhythms that resonate in an unstable space. Recognizing genius, Adolphe Thiers, a journalist who was later to become President of France, claimed that the painting combined the virility of Michelangelo and the fecundity of Rubens. In fact, the doomed souls echo not only the monumental restlessness and heroic musculature of the Medici tombs but the corporeal energies of Rubens's most dynamic nudes. Next to the ethereal visions of Dante illustrated by Flaxman or Blake, Delacroix's painting seems startlingly sensuous and palpable, a fusion of warm Venetian color with the most immediate, tactile presence of struggling flesh.

For the next Salon, that of 1824, Delacroix turned temporarily from poetic fictions to a contemporary subject whose reported horrors rivaled those of the *Medusa* itself. For all of liberal Europe, the Greek revolt against the Turks was a theme of consuming interest. Its associative power—

Fig. 118 **Eugène Delacroix**, *The Bark of Dante*, Salon of 1822. Oil on canvas, 74 × 94⅞". Louvre, Paris.

from a modern re-creation of an ancient conflict between classical and barbarian forces to a contemporary spectacle of exotic passions and brutality geared to the cause of liberty—was enormous, and already in 1821, after the outbreak of these wars, Delacroix contemplated a painting based on these conflicts remote in space but immediate in the Western European consciousness. An event of April 1822 helped to crystallize this ambition. To suppress again the Greeks, who had declared their independence in January, the sultan sent an army of ten thousand to the island of Chios, where some twenty thousand inhabitants were massacred, and countless women and children were taken into slavery to fill the markets of North Africa. Like Géricault for *The Medusa*, Delacroix consulted the published documentation and its eyewitness author, Colonel Vautier, in order to achieve a maximum of reportorial accuracy; and when he exhibited the painting, his lengthy title reflected these journalistic concerns: *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios; Greek Families Awaiting Death or Slavery, etc.—See Various Accounts and Contemporary Newspapers* (fig. 119).

Even by the standards of 1819, as defined in *The Medusa*, the painting was a shocking assault on the great traditions of history painting, and Gros himself, whose *Pesthouse at Jaffa* (see fig. 53) prefigured these exotic horrors, could only quip, "It's the massacre of painting." For here, still more than *The Medusa*, was a painting not only without a hero, but even without a core. In the center, where we might expect a heroic climax, is a hollow rush of space that carries us across scorched plains, domestic rubble, and gloomy skies to a faraway combat, the death rattle of this brutal conquest. In the foreground, in a sudden shift of scale, is a display of human debris, forced close to our view by the imprisoning boundaries of a Turkish soldier holding a rifle and of a victorious horseman, whose head alone surmounts the horizon with an expression of chilling indifference to those below. The conquered Greeks, clinging to each other in pathetic family groups,

have fallen into a hopeless exhaustion and lassitude, made all the more poignant by the desperate, last-minute effort of a prisoner to attack the Turk who has tied a Greek woman to his horse. Below her writhing nude torso, destined for sexual slavery, is perhaps the grimmest of all displays—a dead mother, whose living infant still seeks milk at her breast. But for all the documentary accuracy in this morbid catalogue of contemporary barbarism, *The Massacres* still has a fictional quality. However tattered in defeat, the exotic costumes, of which Delacroix made close studies in Paris, lend an enchanted Arabian Nights atmosphere to the scene. Moreover, this flavor of Near Eastern sensuousness was further supported by Delacroix's study of Persian miniatures, whose flat and brilliant surfaces are reflected here in, among other things, the intense colors and the high horizon line that constricts many of the lower figures into sharply contoured patterns. This may be an artist-journalist's account of the human degradation reported in the Greek War of Independence, but it is also an imagined adventure that wallows in an orgy of blood, bondage, and exotic gorgeousness.

At the Salon of 1824, many new directions, both French and foreign, converged for the first time in a clear historical focus. Not only was there a particularly rich display of British watercolors and paintings, including three Constables, whose vibrant, flecked surfaces inspired Delacroix, at the last minute, to retouch some of the foreground figures of *The Massacres*; but there was also a major new painting by Ingres, which could represent the stable voice of tradition against Delacroix's shocking veneration of horror and disorder. Like his earlier *Napoleon* or *Jupiter and Thetis* (see figs. 49 and 54), Ingres's *Vow of Louis XIII* (**fig. 120**) takes us to a remote and, in part, timeless realm. The commissioned subject was in itself an evocation of a lost historical epoch that the Bourbon Restoration authorities hoped to resurrect: Louis XIII is shown in February 1638 placing

Fig. 119. **Eugène Delacroix**, *Scenes from the Massacres at Chios*, Salon of 1824. Oil on canvas, 13′ 8¼″ × 11′ 7⅜″. Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 120 **Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres**, *The Vow of Louis XIII*, Salon of 1824. Oil on canvas, 13′ 9¾″ × 8′ 8⅛″. Montauban Cathedral.

France under the protection of the Virgin of the Assumption. This fusion of church and state posed many problems for Ingres in its collision of natural and supernatural events; but he resolved the contradictions by presenting the scene in two zones, each painted in a different mode. Below, the Bourbon king is represented in the sharpest focus, his lace, velvet, and ermine robe as specific and palpable as his proffered crown and scepter. Suitable for a particular historical personage at a particular time, this materialistic style was unsuitable for the heavenly and eternal dramatis personae to whom he pledges his country. The apparition of the Virgin and Child, revealed in a glow of light behind symmetrically parted curtains, belongs rather to an ideal realm, that of the everlasting beauty of art and religion as defined by Raphael, whom Ingres venerated. Like the putti with the tablet below, the Madonna above is a close paraphrase of the Renaissance master's inventions (here the *Sistine Madonna*), for Ingres believed that some of the eternal verities of art could at best only be respectfully restated, though with inevitable variations. Ingres's re-creation of Raphael's ideal harmonies and generalized surfaces has, in fact, a curious new flavor, not only in a certain hardening of form that reveals the materialist premises of this eclectic reconstruction of the past, but in the odd psychology of the Virgin and Child, whose imperious and almost sensual gaze on the earthling below recalls the image of supplication before a supreme authority defined in *Jupiter and Thetis*, an image almost more chilling than pious.

For all its strange undercurrents, Ingres's painting could easily have represented, at the Salon of 1824, a call to arms for the values of tradition, whether of art or of the *ancien régime*; and its simultaneous appearance with Delacroix's *Massacres* virtually elected the older master as preserver of time-honored beauty and stability against such youthful rebels as Géricault and Delacroix, who would propagate a cult of ugliness, violence, and disorder. In keeping with a long French tradition of polarizing aesthetic beliefs into enemy camps, such as the ancients versus the moderns, Rubens versus Poussin, or Shakespeare versus Racine, the Ingres-Delacroix confrontation at the 1824 Salon mobilized two adversaries who would fight under the rubrics Classic and Romantic, a black-and-white antagonism that ignored the many shades of gray we now see in historical retrospect.

As for Ingres's master and the father-figure of modern Classicism, Jacques-Louis David, this exiled regicide was also able to make a pictorial statement in Paris in 1824, the year before his death in Brussels. On May 26, three months before the opening of the Salon, a private exhibition of David's work was inaugurated that included not only old, prerevolutionary paintings still in his possession but a major new canvas, completed that year, which grandly perpetuated a belief in classical deities. *Mars Disarmed by Venus and the Three Graces* (fig. 121) was not only David's swansong, but an overt contradiction of the high moral seriousness and virile political engagement that marked his life and art before the fall of Napoleon. Here the god of war reverses his usual role; for instead of preparing for battle, he is seduced and disrobed by Venus herself, accompanied by her helpful son, Cupid, who removes his sandals, and by the Three Graces, who bring him nectar and deftly carry off his helmet and shield. On his already naked lap, inclined toward Venus' nearly supine torso, a pair of billing and cooing doves leaves no doubt about who has triumphed. This inversion of David's familiar ethos—be prepared for war, not love—is the surprising climax of a subterranean but recurrent impulse in his art, a chilly but voluptuous sensuality that could flower in Brussels, where the aging master was fully divorced from the political exigencies of Revolutionary and Napoleonic Paris. The *Mars and Venus*