Fig. 126 **Théodore Gudin**, *The Devotion of Captain Desse*, Salon of 1831. Oil on canvas, 7′ × 9′ 10″. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux.

this epic turbulence that could provide for the younger generation a liberating catharsis from the conservative traditions established by David and perpetuated by Ingres. Delacroix, the greatest of these rebels, could even apply the excitement of an abstract poetic and pictorial ideal of liberty to the political actualities of the July Revolution of 1830, which immediately followed repressive legislation that raised taxes for the middle classes and curtailed freedom of the press and many voting privileges. Like his Romantic colleagues, Delacroix was usually more inflamed by literary fiction or exotic fact than by the realities of life in Paris: but the concept of liberty had an overwhelming poetic power for him, as it did for Byron, who, in 1824 at Missolonghi, had lost his life for it while crusading for Greek independence. Although Delacroix's own political and social leanings were clearly more aristocratic than proletarian, he was an excited eyewitness to the popular uprisings in Paris during the "three glorious days" of July 27–29, 1830, and determined to commemorate them in a painting that would resurrect the spirit of revolutionary idealism that had come to a halt with the Congress of Vienna (**fig. 127**). The Salon title itself, *July 28: Liberty Leading the People*, reflects the difficult mixture of contemporary historical fact and poetic allegory that dominated Delacroix's conception. In front of the smoking barricade, almost at our own feet, is an unsparing record of the human sacrifices to liberty, a civilian and two soldiers, whose contemporary costume and brutal display of the ignoble facts of death give the scene the kind of journalistic truth familiar to the grisly foregrounds of so many Napoleonic history paintings by Gros and others (see fig. 52). But these literal facts are swiftly transcended as we continue to look upward with the wounded man who raises himself from the rubble to stare into a higher realm. There, accompanied still by the urban realities of, reading from the left, a vengeful worker brandishing a cutlass, a plug-hatted student armed with a musket, and a street child in a beret holding a pistol in each hand, is the reigning muse, a passionate female leader who can step across the debris of the barricades and wield a bayonet as well as ascend, with her tricolor flag, to the poetic heights of liberty with a capital *L*. This hybrid creature, both of Paris and of Olympus, brings with her a multitude of associations. Her simple headpiece recalls the Phrygian cap of liberty, and the vigorous striding motion of her bare-breasted torso evokes as well such classical references as the Victory of Samothrace. But she also conjures

up many actual accounts of the heroism of women during the street fighting, just as her youthful companion may also symbolize various tales of adolescent courage. This capacity to transform the particularities of a bloody revolution into a poetic hymn to French liberty continues in the glimpse at the right of the Île de la Cité and of Notre-Dame (from whose distant towers the tricolor flag, raised in revolutionary triumph, is just visible) and in the patriotic orchestration of color, in which red, white, and blue resonate throughout. In some ways, Delacroix's *Liberty* is only a late variation on the heroic street fighting recorded by Copley in the *Death of Major Peirson* (see fig. 6), but what makes it so original is its power to rekindle a revolutionary faith in an abstract deity after so many political gods had come and gone. The powerless, leaderless crew of the *Medusa*'s raft is suddenly resurrected here by Liberty, who, at the apex of a human pyramid of death and rebirth, strides forward into our space, her flag bursting across the upper frame.

How compelling Delacroix's pictorial and imaginative energies are may be measured by crossing the French border to Belgium, where, one month after the July Revolution in Paris, a popular revolution erupted against the Dutch government that had been forced upon the country at the Congress of Vienna. The most famous record of this nationalistic struggle was that by a young painter, Gustaaf Wappers (1803–74), who in fact had visited Paris in the late 1820s in time to see how the fleshy, dynamic style of his own countryman Rubens could be transformed into a passionate new kind of history painting. Thanks to David's exile in Brussels (1816–25), Belgian painting had been dominated by an icy Classicism; and the alternative of Rubens could mean for a young Belgian not only aesthetic but also national freedom. In the tradition of West and Copley, Wappers was able to shift from an earlier national past (most frequently the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) to the immediacy of the national present, as in the case of his *Episode from the Belgian Revolution of*

Fig. 127 **Eugène Delacroix,** *July 28: Liberty Leading the People,* 1830. Oil on canvas, 8′ 6⅜″ × 10′ 8″. Louvre, Paris.

1830 (fig. 128). Prepared for exhibition in Antwerp in 1835 and then shown triumphantly throughout the Continent, this twenty-two-foot-wide canvas commemorates the heroic resistance of the Brussels population against the Dutch troops who invaded the city on September 23, to be repelled three days later. Like Delacroix's *Liberty*, it pinpoints in the background a particular site of nationalistic resonance, here the Grand-Place, the late medieval city center of Brussels. Similarly, it telescopes the fullest range of civilian turmoil, patriotism, and sacrifice, from a prancing dog and drummer boy to heart-rending close-up views of one family mourning a dying son and another about to be rent asunder by the father who drags himself away from his wife and child with one arm raised in angry protest against the Prince of Orange's oppressive proclamation. But if the literally flag-waving nationalism of Wappers's painting parallels Delacroix's *Liberty*, its imaginative level does not. For here, the glorification of a popular revolution through such venerable echoes as a Pietà motif or paraphrases of Rubens's energetic groupings adds up only to a jingoistic prose account of an actual event. Wappers's interpretations of history had legions of successors, not only in Belgium, through his own role as professor and then director of the Antwerp Academy, but in more general terms, throughout Europe and America, where comparable nationalistic needs guaranteed that artists would be constantly commissioned to paint or, better put, to manufacture idealized documents of historical events, past and present. For the most part, the results are equatable with textbook illustrations. After the demise of Napoleonic ideals in 1815, it took the greatest of painters—a Delacroix or a Manet (see fig. 280)—to accommodate this public demand to the highest demands of their own vision.

Indeed, after *Liberty* and several competition entries of 1831 to illustrate episodes from the French Revolution, Delacroix himself retreated from the painting of modern history, turning away from the realities of Paris life under the new citizen-king, Louis-Philippe, and toward the inspiration of the Bible, of the classics, of medieval history, and of literature from Shakespeare to Byron, as well as to the still accessible fantasies provided by the living experience of a four-month visit to Morocco in 1832. As the guest of the Count of Mornay, Delacroix was to help document a diplomatic trip, and he did so avidly in seven notebooks filled with drawings and watercolors, executed in what seems a frenzy of excitement. Such a fascination with the

Fig. 128 **Gustaaf Wappers**, *Episode from the Belgian Revolution of 1830*, 1835. Oil on canvas, 14′ 9½″ × 22′. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts/Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten, Brussels.

Fig. 129 **Eugène Delacroix,** *Women of Algiers*. Oil on canvas, $70\frac{7}{8} \times 90\frac{1}{8}$". Louvre, Paris.

sensuous detail of an exotic world was already apparent in the 1820s, when Delacroix prepared paintings of Near Eastern subjects, but here was an opportunity to see an Islamic civilization first-hand. The intense documentary jottings he made there provided imaginative nourishment for the remainder of his long career, beginning with a major Salon entry of 1834, *Women of Algiers* (**fig. 129**). At the end of his North African sojourn, he was able to arrange access to a harem, and was enthralled there by what seemed to him a survival of the ancient Mediterranean world, as beautiful, he said, as in the time of Homer. What he saw was the preservation of a world inhabited exclusively by women, a voluptuous hothouse environment in which female flowers could flourish—beings dedicated solely to a life of pleasure, whether of the flesh, of the palate, or of the making of the gorgeous costumes that Delacroix constantly recorded. Renoir commented that when he got close to *Women of Algiers*, he could smell incense: the painting indeed exudes a narcotic atmosphere that permeates the shadowy room, from the water-cooled smoke of the hookah, with its serpentine tube, to the postures of animal relaxation in a world whose timeless torpor is interrupted only by the just-visible gold watch hanging on the right breast of the woman in the center and by the quiet departure of the black servant. These cloistered creatures were a living incarnation of a recurrent nineteenth-century dream of Western male tourists and spectators, a dream of women as carnal beings adorned by flowers, fragrances, jewels, exquisite fabrics. Ironically, Delacroix in the same decade became a close friend of that Frenchwoman who had so urgently promoted woman's right to be man's social and intellectual equal, George Sand.

The pervasive eroticism of *Women of Algiers* was amplified by Delacroix's painting techniques, which attained such a resonant interweaving of dabs of intense hue that figures and ambience seem to merge in veils of warm, softly lambent color. But for many artists and critics, this loosening of contour and brushstroke, dependent as it was upon

the great traditions of Rubens and the Venetian masters, became the earmark of an undisciplined, rebellious style that even Delacroix's great defender Baudelaire would later characterize as painting with "a drunken broom." There was, in fact, abundant counterdemonstration of a more fettered approach to painting, even when dealing with the erotic abandon of a harem, and no one provided a sterner alternative than Ingres. From his earliest years, Ingres had been fascinated by the linear manipulation of the female form, making it bend and twist to demands that mixed the aesthetic and the erotic. His conception of women cut across many strata, whether in the classical guise of the nymph Thetis (see fig. 54) or the exotic motif of Near Eastern bathers and odalisques; and he constantly competed with Delacroix in his own harem territory, re-creating with the same documentary precision those perfumed gardens of a non-Western world that cultivated secluded spaces for the uninhibited display of feminine sensuality. In his *Odalisque with Slave* of 1839–40 (**fig. 130**), painted for the delectation of a private male patron, he drastically lowered the temperature of Delacroix's *Women of Algiers*, chilling his colors and contours to a glacial inflexibility that is paradoxically at odds with the wanton theme. Gautier's later quip that Ingres was "a Chinese . . . lost in the streets of Athens" becomes intelligible before this complex fusion of classical and Oriental sensibilities: on the one hand, a reclining idealized nude whose ancestry evokes the great Venuses of Western painting as well as the marble Ariadnes of Greco-Roman antiquity; on the other, an obsession with an exotic world that relieves the restraint and drabness of nineteenth-century Western realities with a proliferation of Islamic ornamental surfaces, of exquisitely wrought artifacts (from the floor tiles and feather fan to the fountain and balusters), and even of different races (the standing black eunuch and the olive-skinned slave who plays the *tār*, an Oriental lute). As rigorous as his master David in his ability to interlock a multitude of rectilinear volumes and surfaces, Ingres nevertheless evokes here a feminine ambience of voluptuous relaxation and engulfing sensuousness. (The painting, in fact, has even been interpreted as an

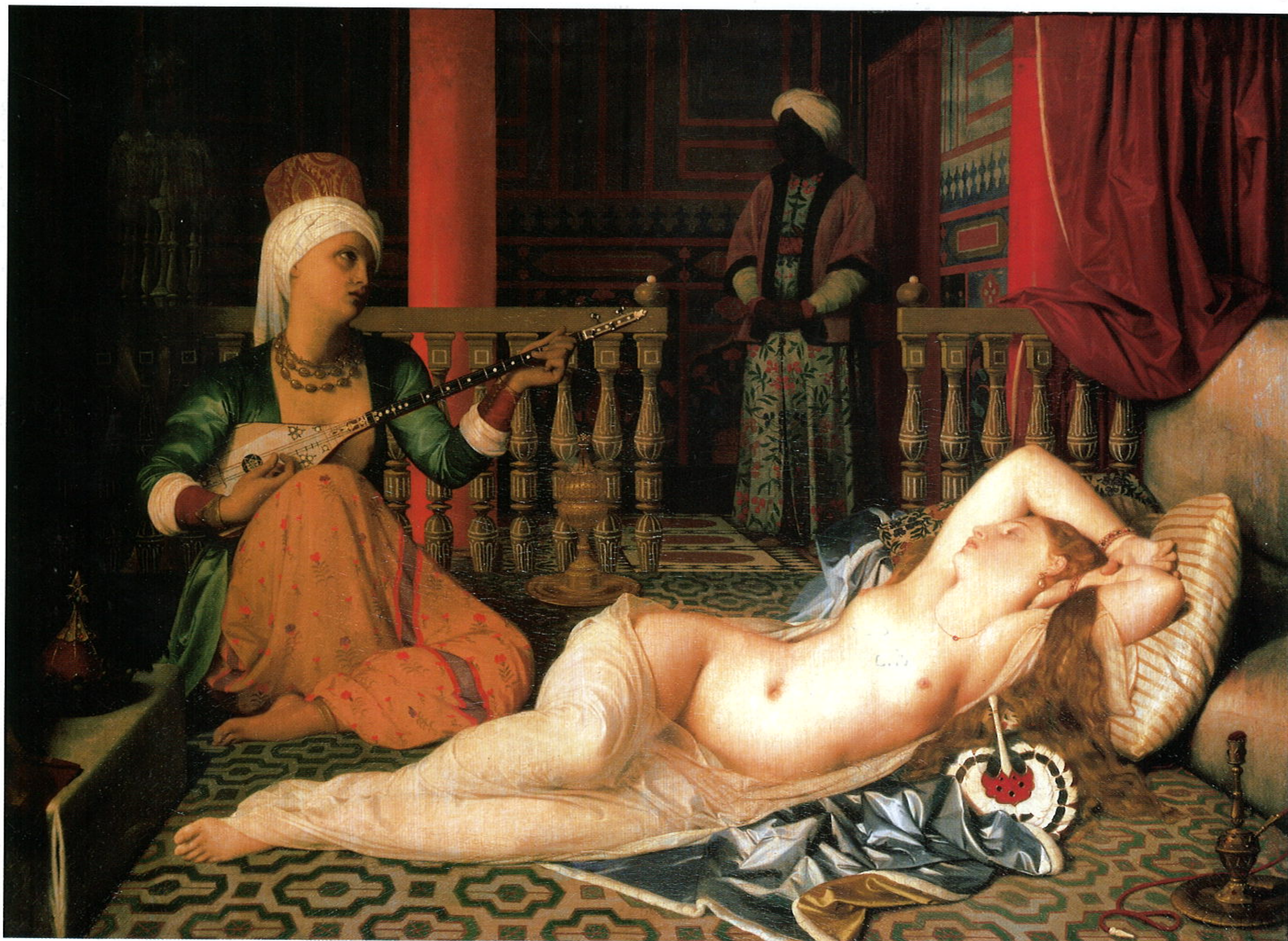

Fig. 130 **Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres**, *Odalisque with Slave*, 1839–40. Oil on canvas mounted on panel, 28¾ × 40″. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.