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‘STATUS VIATORIS’: A NEW CONSTRUCTION OF DEATH
IN PAINTINGS BY THÉODORE GÉRICAULT AND EUGÈNE DELACROIX
AND PRINTS OF PÈRE LACHAISE CEMETERY, 1815-1830

A Dissertation in
Art History
by
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ABSTRACT

During the Bourbon Restoration (1815–1830), Théodore Géricault and Eugène Delacroix created a number of paintings that depict corpses. On second look, however, many of these bodies are still alive, or exist in an ambiguous state between life and death. Similarly prints of Père Lachaise in travel guidebooks and vues pittoresques juxtapose living and dead figures in such a way as to suggest that the cemetery is a borderland space where life meets death. This project examines the ways in which these representations of death illustrate what is referred to as a status viatoris—the ambiguous stage separating life from death—that is reflective of contemporary medical studies on the dying body as well as influenced by the presence of death in society, and feelings of uncertainty associated with the defeat of Napoleon, the return of the Bourbon monarchy, and the sense of dismay and disillusionment related to the disease known as the mal du siècle.

The philosophical concept of status viatoris is borrowed from its original theological meaning which defined the progression of life on its way to death. This study relocates its meaning to a medico-scientific understanding associated with late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century studies on death. These investigations—inspired by numerous cases of people being buried alive, health concerns from the effects of overpopulated graveyards and decomposing corpses, and studies of decapitated heads—encouraged doctors and scientists to pursue a greater understanding of the human body through the practice of dissections and close observation of corpses. They determined that a stage exists after life but before real death, and suggested that a body dies progressively, in stages. It is this ambiguous period, or a status viatoris, that appears in paintings by Géricault and Delacroix and in prints of Père Lachaise. A fresh examination of these images and this discourse on death in light of the political, social, and
intellectual culture of France as well as the medico-scientific literature, will provide a new understanding of art focused on the morbidly fascinating subject of death during the Romantic period.
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Introduction

I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me.¹

Years after his morbid experiment, Dr. Frankenstein recited these vivid details of decay and curious transformations of the human body witnessed during his visits to charnel-houses and morgues. It was there where he studied the physiology of the body, the better to understand the differences between the living and the dead. In his exploration of and play with science and humanity, Frankenstein ultimately discovered the key to chemically recreate life; he decisively reversed the process that occurs in the stage between life and death. Informed by galvanism, vitalism, and pathology, Mary Shelley’s ghost story written in 1816 and 1817 about an overly ambitious scientist’s reanimation of life paralleled artists’ current investigation and interest in physiology and the realistic effects of dying and death on the human body.

Death may be natural, but the ways in which it is understood are cultural. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a growing fascination not only with death, as is commonly known, but also with the line that separates life from death. The contemporaneous Romantic movement also created an atmosphere for artists to readily explore new and different ways to portray this ambiguous aspect of death. There is little doubt that the presence of public executions, fresh memories of violent battles during the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, stories of people being buried alive, ghastly, macabre details found in the Gothic novel, or what is frequently called the mal du siècle—the cultural disease popular during the early nineteenth

century that was expressive of the melancholy and the disillusionment felt by society, influenced artists to feature death as a frequent subject in works of art. However, the fascination with the dead and dying also resulted from the scientific inquiry by doctors and scientists into the stages of dying, and the ways in which we verify death. A veritable medical revolution had occurred in Europe between 1770 and 1830 wherein “the entire way of seeing the human body within the process of dying had undergone significant transformation.”2 In the late eighteenth century, the turn toward modern pathology and vitalism, a study of the vital principles of life that functioned to avoid death, created an environment in medical institutions for a new focus on the close observation of bodies. This change was aided by new and lesser restrictions on the availability of corpses for educational purposes, which allowed students and artists greater access to cadavers at the morgues, hospitals, and dissection halls. By the early nineteenth century, doctors’ and scientists’ findings had offered scientific proof that bodies die progressively, in stages. The influence of these recent discoveries in contemporary medical science, coupled with the interest to study corpses and a move away from the plasticity and idealism of the neoclassical style, led artists to pursue more realistic and grotesque depictions of the human body; their portrayals privileged the recent scientifically-recognized changes of a body as it proceeded from life to death.

It is this preoccupation with dying and its representation in the form of a status viatoris that are examined in this study. This philosophical phrase, status viatoris, is borrowed from the twentieth-century philosopher, Josef Pieper, whose definition of it centered on the dynamic progress of life on its way to death (or the afterlife). I, however, have relocated the meaning of a

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status viatoris from its theo-philosophical origins to a medico-scientific understanding of dying that is more relevant to the Restoration; in this dissertation, the status viatoris refers to the period when life is believed to have left the body, but before actual death is confirmed. Through a unique analysis of paintings by Théodore Géricault and Eugène Delacroix from the Restoration, I show how these artists depicted bodies with ambiguous characteristics associated with the living and the dead that resulted in their portrayal as neither alive nor dead, but dying, or in a status viatoris. Similarly, through an examination of prints of Père Lachaise I suggest how the cemetery, intended as a place for the dead, actually became a place for the living to experience life and thus, featured figures and the space of the cemetery in a static, or non-progressing place where life meets death.

My focus on only two painters and cemetery prints from travel guidebooks may seem like an arbitrary choice for this short but vast period of art production. However, by narrowing my examination of the presence of a status viatoris to a number of well-known paintings, I provide a new means to read these images: one that relies upon the close scrutiny of figures and fragments of bodies and the ways in which they illustrate characteristics borrowed from contemporary medical science. Géricault and Delacroix epitomize French Romanticism and their œuvres contain several examples of scenes concerned with the dying or the dead, such as Géricault’s Raft of the ‘Medusa,’ and the studies of severed heads and limbs he made, and Delacroix’s Dante and Virgil in Hell, Massacres at Chios, Death of Sardanapalus, Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi, and Liberty Leading the People. The chronology and development of these two œuvres ideally suits this examination whereby Géricault marks the early period of the Restoration and Delacroix follows, as a kind of student of the Raft of the ‘Medusa,’ to represent the second half. I do not mean to suggest that these artists purposely or primarily created their
paintings to focus on this idea of a *status viatoris* but rather that in light of the medico-scientific advancements and knowledge it can be shown how this in-between phase does appear in their work. The inclusion of prints not only broadens consideration through medium but shows how the prevalence of the *status viatoris* extended into the commercial and the popular culture of France and thus cultivated what I am calling a new spectacle of death. By this I mean that Père Lachaise became a form of entertainment whose representation in travel guidebooks resulted in its commodification.

Although these developments can be seen to span a broader time frame from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, I am focusing on the Bourbon Restoration for a particular set of reasons. This period witnessed a deluge of images about death not only in academic paintings but also, due to the invention of lithography in 1796, in prints (documentary, didactic, travel guidebooks, academic, artistic, etc.) that featured scenes of death. However violence and death was readily present during this period in the public realm after Napoleon’s abdication and the reinstatement of a conservative monarchy which may have help shape artists’ perceptions of how to depict their own images concerned with dying and dead figures. Also, unique to this era, are the feelings of dismay, disillusionment, and homelessness often associated with the *mal du siècle* that developed with the return of the Bourbon government and inspired more melancholic scenes and sometimes even death. Géricault and Delacroix’s works are rich with these ideas and will allow me to thoroughly explore the *status viatoris* within this brief period. This study also suggests that this philosophical idea manifest in various ways and offers fresh interpretations of familiar and unfamiliar images while opening the door for analysis of other works from the period. And finally, by framing this study within the Restoration, the origins of such philosophies as positivism and artistic movements like Realism can be seen to
have been formulated by these Romantic artists who focused on material reality, scientific facts, and knowledge via empirical data (medical science research—experiments, dissections, and autopsies) to create more true depictions of bodies (the dead and the dying).

Despite the numerous descriptions and references to death motifs in art dating between 1815 and 1830, scholars have not critically discussed the possible meanings of these ambiguous dying and death scenes. Art historians have usually focused on the diverse array of contemporary political, historical, and literary issues, and have not pursued a contextualized philosophical inquiry into the subject of death. I, however, provide a unique perspective on scenes concerned with death and dying and supposedly dead figures from the Restoration that conforms neither to a monograph on a single artist, a general study of several artists from one period, nor an investigation of one particular medium. The result becomes a combination of art, cultural, political, social, and medical history on one of the most mysterious and intriguing aspects of life: dying and death. There is some noteworthy historical and art historical literature from the past forty years that has examined some aspect of this subject as it concerns the knowledge of and attitudes toward death during the Bourbon Restoration, the art of the period, and the development of garden cemeteries which have informed the ideas and methodologies present in my dissertation. A brief review of this scholarship will highlight their significance and impact on this study.

The study of death—thanatology—began approximately thirty years ago when French historians Michel Vovelle, Philippe Ariès, and Michel Ragon, among others, created the foundations of a historicity of death. The beliefs, social customs, and practices that surround the dead, as well as developments in the funeral business, cemetery architecture, and legal aspects of burials are just a few of the topics explored in their work. My understanding of death during the
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been shaped by a combination of their specific and
general studies in this field. Vovelle, the pioneer of this field, focused in his early work on
sepulchral monuments from the late Gothic. However, in *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en
Provence au XVIIIe siècle*, he concentrated on a social history of death in the eighteenth
century. He labeled the culture’s attitude toward death as a ‘dechristianization’ based upon his
study of notary documents and wills which indicated a decline in the request for requiem masses,
the number of gifts to the church, and the use of invocations at the beginning of wills, among
other traditions. He suggested that we could see a demise of religious beliefs, especially belief in
the afterlife. His work marked a shift toward a history of *mentalités* that focused on cultural and
social attitudes and beliefs. But Vovelle also set the stage for other historians such as Ariès and
Ragon to pursue a quantitative analysis and obtain more factual data in connection with death,
and for me, to focus on images of death as representative of cultural beliefs and knowledge of the
state of dying. A brief discussion of their contributions will shed some light on my approach to
examine scenes of dying and death.

Probably the most well-known historian of death, Ariès, chose neither a narrow topic nor
a short timeline for his books. In the 1970s and 1980s he focused on death in the context of
social and familial relations from the Middle Ages to the present in *Western Attitudes Toward
Death* and *The Hour of Our Death.* In both books, his primary outline remained the same: a
history of the changes and developments in attitudes toward death. Ariès’ study, though valuable
for its insights, ranges broadly over such disparate documents as wills, sermons, personal letters,

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contemporary literature, folklore, legal documents regarding burial laws, cemeteries, morgues and medical treatment. Despite the inherent problems with Ariès’ broad categories, his findings remain useful for my study. He set a precedent for this topic in his focus on a variety of resources concerned with death, and opened the door for my similarly interdisciplinary approach to interpreting representations of death.

Two authors that followed the methodologies and tendencies of Vovelle and Ariès are John McManners and Thomas Kselman.\(^5\) McManners’ *Death and the Enlightenment* can be seen as a response to Vovelle’s work in that the former denies that a ‘dechristianization’ occurred. Instead McManners argues how a growth in familial trust altered the wording of wills and that there was a change in the nature of spirituality, not necessarily a decline in belief. Although both McManners and Kselman concentrated on the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century France respectively, they provided a more cohesive and specific social history of death and beliefs concerning the afterlife. Their sources, comprised of demographical data, rural ethnography, wills, sermons, religious practices, medical scholarship, folklore, and information on the development and regulation of the funeral business, allowed for a better understanding of the changing beliefs and practices related to dying.

Several histories of cemetery architecture have also made important contributions, such as Michel Ragon’s *The Space of Death*, Richard Etlin’s *The Architecture of Death*, and James Curl’s *A Celebration of Death*.\(^6\) All three authors were influenced by the growing interest in a social history of death, and in different ways focus on how feelings about death affected

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cemetery designs, commemorative tombs, and decorations for the deceased. Etlin’s book remains a bit more indebted to the historicities of death put forth by the French historians in the 1970s. He utilizes the physical urban surroundings, including the cemeteries, to suggest how the creation of spaces for the remains of the dead reveals a great deal about a culture. Ragon, however, is not concerned with a social history but instead focuses on the role of death by means of studying its architecture and decoration; he considers how burial practices and cemeteries developed. Curl’s book, A Celebration of Death, is even less socially based. He offers a general historical synthesis of cemetery developments around the world and demonstrates how a history of death can be drawn from the physical evidence of the architecture that surrounds death.

Slightly different from the social histories of death, burials, and cemetery architecture, Daniel Arasse’s The Guillotine and the Terror examines death between 1793 and 1794 as a political event. He traces the history and politics of the development and use of the guillotine. Relevant here is his analysis of a late eighteenth-century understanding of the momentary nature or instans of the guillotine’s actions, as many people believed in such a thing as “incomplete” death as well as “absolute” death. His discussions of the victims’ physical experiences suggest that people in the eighteenth century perceived an ambiguous moment between life and death. This work has greatly influenced my observations of the representation of death in early nineteenth-century paintings.

Art historians working on the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have certainly looked to the social and cultural histories originating in France. Many of these, however, have focused on the body politic and have located the meanings of works of art in the context of contemporary politics. There are several reasons why art historians are drawn to politics in

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Restoration works. Perhaps the immediate point of reference would be the Revolutionary body, especially the decapitation of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette, which has more recently been discussed in a historical context in Antoine de Baecque’s *Glory and Terror: Seven Deaths Under the French Revolution*. He defines by example how politics and the body are related, but can be seen more poignantly in the form of seven corpses.⁸ De Baecque analyzes the multivalent meanings of the corpse in Revolutionary society. Similarly, “Beheadings” by Regina Jones also addresses the power of the corpse, but focuses on the decapitated head as representative of Revolutionary authority and power of the people.⁹ In her opinion, it was the decapitated head—ambiguously alive or dead—that became one of the most political symbols of the Revolution.

Ewa Lajer-Burcharth also addressed the body in *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David After the Terror* but focused instead on the regeneration of the social body as portrayed by David from 1794 to 1800.¹⁰ For the most part, she is not concerned with David’s depiction of corpses or dying bodies except, in an interesting way, in the medallion portraits of fellow prisoners expecting to be executed. Here, as in elsewhere throughout her interpretations, Lajer-Burcharth suggested David strove to construct a psychocultural aspect of society after the Terror and renew the prisoners’ identities, as well as David’s own, through a new aesthetic of fashioning their likenesses to what they would become instead of their present state. For example, in the medallion portraits, subjects were depicted with the red ribbons or ties wrapped around their necks anticipating the line of severance caused by the guillotine. Her work

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incorporated a psychoanalytic methodology that, although useful and beneficial for her topic, does not accord with the intentions of my research.

The most important art historical precedents for a discussion of representations of death during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods come from the work of Thomas Crow, T.J. Clark, Christopher Prendergast, and David O’Brien. These scholars’ books have been foundational in mapping the historical trajectory of artists such as Jacques-Louis David, Antoine-Jean Gros, and Anne-Louis Girodet, among many others, with their attention to the political, social, and cultural context of each artist. Crow’s *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France* focused on the studio system of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with an interpretation of works seen through a social, and even biographical, lens. Revolutionary and Post-Revolutionary images that contain dead or dying figures are approached with a formal interest as well as a focus on artistic influence. Considering his concern with a narrative of artistic formation it is not surprising that the role of death in paintings is not as significant to his project as it is in my dissertation. Similarly, T.J. Clark’s major study of David’s *Marat at His Last Breath (Death of Marat)* in *Farewell to an Idea* pursued the political meaning and purpose behind this painting. His thorough analysis of its creation, exhibition, and possible meanings for contemporary viewers only tangentially regard the actual stages of dying suffered by Marat. At the same time his close reading of the painting sets a precedent for this investigation into ways of viewing the nuances of dying and the *status viatoris* in this period.

Another important model for discussions of death scenes, specifically the Napoleonic commissions for large battle scenes by Gros, comes from studies by Prendergast and O’Brien. Both investigate the political purposes behind the commissions but also analyze the political and

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propagandistic grounds for the paintings. Prendergast’s *Napoleon and History Painting: Antoine-Jean Gros’s ‘La Bataille d’Eylau’* utilizes semiotic and deconstructive theories to interpret the composition. He finds the painting structured by a centrifugal arrangement of figures and objects, but also inflicted by the violence of the frame that cuts off some figures, adding to the death and destruction present in the rest of the scene. Issues of temporality and the moment of death represented in a history painting are thoroughly discussed, suggesting that all history painting that includes a death scene portrays a type of martyrdom, that of the *exemplum virtutis*. However, Prendergast also seems to be aware that Napoleonic history paintings may well have marked the end of representations of the *exemplum virtutis* and allegories of martyrdom. He specifically chooses to focus on the moment just prior to the Romantic revolution of death scenes like Géricault’s *Raft of the ‘Medusa,*’ and to acknowledge Gros’s indebtedness to Neoclassical political and aesthetic ideologies.

In “Propaganda and the Republic of the Arts in Antoine-Jean Gros’s *Napoleon Visiting the Battlefield of Eylau the Morning after the Battle*” and his book, *After the Revolution: Antoine-Jean Gros, Art, and Propaganda under Napoleon*, David O’Brien examines the political implications inherent in Gros’s paintings of battle scenes. O’Brien calls attention to the dead bodies as purposely placed in the foreground both to satisfy stipulations in the commission and to fulfill the government's propagandistic purposes. Although both O’Brien and Prendergast are interested in political aspects, their approach to observing and reading meaning into dying and dead figures has informed this study.

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Elisabeth Fraser’s book, *Delacroix, Art, and Patrimony in Postrevolutionary France*, adheres to methodologies and political tendencies set by Prendergast and O’Brien.\(^{15}\) For example, in the chapter titled, “Delacroix’s *Sardanapalus*: The Life and Death of the Royal Body,” she analyzes the body of Sardanapalus who is faced with death in comparison to ways of representing the royal body during the Restoration and the body’s relationship to power. Like Prendergast and O’Brien, Fraser addresses the representation of the dying or dead body in a political sense.

Aside from the body politic there have been other means to discuss dying or dead bodies present in paintings from the Restoration. The standard texts on romanticism have treated the subject of death as a basic theme of the movement. Scholars such as Walter Friedlaender, Robert Rosenblum, and Hugh Honour remark on the emotive, grotesque, or naturalistic qualities present in various works from the period, but did not examine death as historically or socially constructed.\(^{16}\) Though still very much stylistically based, Honour’s *Romanticism* places the artwork within a context of contemporary literary, musical, and social developments. Honour thereby suggests ways in which the dead figures in Géricault and Delacroix’s works reflect ideas and feelings present in English Romantic poetry, German music, and French Gothic novels. By reframing Honour’s methodology of placing works within a contemporary aesthetic, stylistic, and cultural context and adding my own layer of investigation into philosophical and medico-scientific constructions, this dissertation further acknowledges the significance of art from the Restoration within its contemporary culture.

\(^{15}\) Elisabeth Fraser, *Delacroix, Art, and Patrimony in Postrevolutionary France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 115-158. The chapter on *Death of Sardanapalus* is a revision of her article, “Delacroix’s *Sardanapalus*: The Life and Death of the Royal Body,” *French Historical Studies* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 315-349.

A few monographs on major artists like Géricault and Delacroix do address the artists’ representations of death. Lorenz Eitner presents a formal and historical analysis in *Géricault’s “Raft of the ‘Medusa’”* and *Géricault: His Life and Work* that sometimes treats the subject of the representation of dying and dead figures in this famous painting.\(^\text{17}\) His obvious concern lies with Géricault’s apparent intentions to evoke the emotions and horror of the victims and draw attention to the morbid aspects of the work. Eitner does, however, identify a few victims scattered on the raft who appear to be in the throes of dying but not quite dead, and quotes contemporary criticism echoing similar ideas but does not consider the implications of their appearance within the greater scientific culture. In *Delacroix: The Death of Sardanapalus*, Jack Spector pursues a psychoanalytic and iconographic approach as he considers the figures, the objects, and the composition.\(^\text{18}\) Spector also considers Delacroix’s interest in death and its subsequent representation in the painting as reflective of the artist’s discontent with politics, as well as his fear of death. A combination of Spector and Eitner’s approach to interpreting a single painting—historical, cultural, aesthetic, and biographical—may sound mundane but, in fact, is essential to my study. This same approach is seen in Lee Johnson’s catalogue raisonné of the work of Delacroix.\(^\text{19}\) Johnson refers to a variety of cultural sources for Delacroix’s paintings, and he attempts to review all of the previous key analyses of Delacroix’s work, which often cite likely sources and influences. He introduces several possible readings of supposedly dying or dead figures but unfortunately does not offer answers for the questions and concerns he raises. His work, however, is indispensable for my dissertation.

Of course there is more recent and narrowly focused scholarship on images of death from the Bourbon Restoration. Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer explores the relationship between Géricault’s paintings of heads and limbs and public executions in her article, “Géricault’s Severed Heads and Limbs: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Scaffold.”\(^\text{20}\) By placing his paintings within the context of Restoration politics and culture, she asserts that the growing fascination with death, witnessed in art and literature, can be linked with exposure to public executions. Although Kallmyer does discuss the life-like appearance of some of Géricault’s severed heads, she does not fully question and investigate the problematic status of an object that appears life-like but represents a lifeless head or limb. And equally interesting for my research is Stefan Germer’s article, “Pleasurable Fear: Géricault and Uncanny Trends at the Opening of the Nineteenth Century,” in which he identifies Géricault’s paintings of heads and limbs as “uncanny” based on meanings he locates in the marginal details.\(^\text{21}\) Germer does address the living presence apparent in Géricault’s heads and limbs but reads this aspect as uncanny and indicative of the artist’s fear of sexual difference. Overall, his approach in interpreting these works disregards the ambiguous representations of the dying and the dead and focuses more on the ability of the paintings to deflect any singular meaning.

Another key work on the period is Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby’s Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France.\(^\text{22}\) When Grigsby examines a painting such as the Raft of the ‘Medusa,’ Massacres at Chios, or Greece on the Ruins at Missolonghi with their living, dead, and dying personages, she relies on the importance of binary oppositions in generating meaning.


\(^{21}\) Stefan Germer, “Pleasurable Fear: Géricault and Uncanny Trends at the Opening of the Nineteenth Century,” *Art History* 22, no. 2 (June 1999): 159-183.

Binary oppositions, such as white/black, male/female, European/Turkish indicate how her interests lie more in racial and gender differences than in the fine line between life and death. She, like many other scholars, describes the death motifs as an alluring and meaningful moment within the image but emphasizes the paintings’ political meanings during this period of Empire building.

Influenced by this abundant scholarship, this dissertation utilizes a variety of histories—artistic, political, social, and medical—even as it touches on deconstructive and Marxist methodologies to assist in a unique analysis of representations of death. In the following four chapters I focus on two artists and two media both popular during the Restoration, widely presented in different venues (exhibitions and books); if several of the paintings made large-scale public statements, the prints were mostly used as personal objects of memorabilia. A brief discussion of the organization of these chapters presents a synopsis of my ideas and the intentions of this study.

Chapter One centers on the role and perception of death and the ways in which it was constructed in early nineteenth-century French society through discoveries concerned with science, religion, and war. The mal du siècle and its revelry of uncertainty, sadness, and sorrow also shaped contemporary ideas of death. Through this discursive analysis, I will present an awareness of what I am calling the status viatoris, the phase after life but before real death, as a new perception and representation of death. I begin by explaining the usage of this concept in the theo-philosophical work of Josef Pieper and how my interpretation differs from his theological focus. I then suggest how the meaning of this in-between and temporal phase can be traced to the eighteenth-century development of medical knowledge on dying that resulted from concerns over premature burials and awareness of the differences between la mort réelle and la
mort apparente. This issue reached its apex in Dr. Jean-Joseph Sue’s *Opinion du citoyen Sue, professeur de médecine et de botanique, sur le supplice de la guillotine*, published in 1796. Other medical scholarship, such as Madame Suzanne Necker’s *Des inhumations précipitées* and Xavier Bichat’s *Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort*, are discussed for their insight and value toward the philosophical concept of a status viatoris. Religious views of the afterlife also reflect similar ideas related to this concept. In a sense, religious views and medical knowledge were both concerned with the uncertain and temporal passage that occurs in the spiritual progression between life and death. The effects of long years of war heightened the experience of the status viatoris, as life and death were seen to present one within the other. For some people, life seemed to be lived as if in an ambiguous borderland after life but before death, and this contributed to what came to be called the mal du siècle.

The second chapter examines the presence of the status viatoris in paintings by Géricault. I focus on his portrayal of figures in the *Raft of the ‘Medusa’* and fragments of bodies in *Severed Heads* and several paintings similarly titled *Anatomical Fragments*. His use of the characteristics of la mort réelle and la mort apparente, presumably learned while studying at the hospital morgue, are analyzed through a combination of my observations, contemporary salon criticism, and the views of other art historians to suggest that Géricault actually depicted several figures and parts of bodies as neither alive nor dead, but somewhere in between the two states.

Chapter Three explores representations of the status viatoris in Delacroix’s paintings concerned with heroic death. Delacroix’s work celebrates the recent view of heroic death that laments the lack of an ideal hero like Napoleon and thus, problematizes the traditional hero’s

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death as ideal and a type of martyrdom. He instead presents heroes who confront death but whose future remains uncertain; they are shown in a *status viatoris*. Several of his large paintings from the Restoration are examined for the ways in which this ambiguous stage appears not only vis-à-vis the physical characteristics of bodies but also through his compositions, subject matter, fragments of bodies, and a combination of all components which differed for each work. These readings exemplify new and varied approaches to portray this philosophical concept as opposed to Géricault’s rather medically-informed depictions of ambiguously dying or dead figures.

In addition to the paintings of the dying and the (supposedly) dead, prints of Père Lachaise found in travel guidebooks and *vues pittoresques*, which have not been critically studied as a genre of cemetery scenes or landscapes, form an important part of this project. Chapter Four investigates numerous prints of Père Lachaise to suggest how a medico-scientific, philosophical, and cultural interest in death contributed to a print genre that originated as an example of a picturesque aesthetic. The landscape genre provides a point of access to study the prints in terms of the picturesque as well as the pastoral; I explore the ways in which a space meant for the dead became a place to experience life. Secondly, a Marxist approach draws a parallel between the prints and the cemetery itself to the commodification of goods present in the new arcades and *passages*. This comparison not only illustrates how the prints and Père Lachaise became a kind of spectacle of death but also suggests how both places celebrate the idea of life, not death. In various ways, then, I propose the prints which feature visitors existing

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in a setting that evokes the juxtaposition of the living and the dead and aspects of life and death are representative of the physical place within a *status viatoris*—the intersection of life and death. This chapter, a focus on the somewhat marginalized medium of tourist prints of a cemetery, will lead to a greater understanding of the construction of death as a *status viatoris* in the Restoration.

By studying the prints of Père Lachaise and paintings of Géricault and Delacroix, new attitudes toward death and the uncertainty of dying during the Restoration will be revealed that have not been cohesively studied in the art from this era. The significance and relative importance of this project lies in its unique approach to analyze and interpret paintings and prints in light of the political, the social, and the intellectual culture of France. Furthermore, the strength of this dissertation derives from its ability to put forward an interdisciplinary understanding of works of art during the Restoration with contemporary research in the medical and scientific communities. A fresh examination of this discourse on death will allow us to look anew at works focused on the morbidly fascinating and ubiquitous Romantic subject of death.
Chapter 1

Defining the Status Viatoris

During the last half of the eighteenth century in France, a newly-developed concern for the dead occurred simultaneously with an increased interest in the scientific and physiological knowledge of bodies, living and dead. Influenced by accounts of premature burials and later by hundreds of decapitations by the guillotine in France, eighteenth-century theorists pleaded for new burial reforms, for an end to people being buried alive; they also expressed an interest in more humane forms of capital punishment. Meanwhile, doctors and scientists focused on the physiological mysteries of death, particularly the moment it occurred and its sometimes ambivalent signs. There was, I will argue, a nascent interest in the moments between life and death, or the status viatoris, that not only encouraged their investigations but was at the crux of their explanations. In the most basic sense, doctors and scientists were essentially trying to figure out how the living could be mistaken for dead and the dead for living; these researchers sought out the physical characteristics of life, and in the absence of these signs, they attempted to ascertain when death actually begins. The stage after life but before real death came to be considered as a dynamic state of existence, albeit ambiguous, transitory, and reversible. Although they did not refer to the temporal distance and physiological differences between a living and dead organism as separated by a status viatoris, their conclusions may be interpreted with this concept in mind.

My interpretation and usage of the status viatoris has its foundation in the medico-scientific argument that ambiguous moments exist between life and death. This will be explained by an analysis of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century
medical treatises that were concerned with distinguishing among the different states, and with the mechanics of how a body dies. In particular, the work by Xavier Bichat on the physiological process of dying is significant for our understanding the concept of the *status viatoris* and its context within the Restoration period. He achieved his results by means of dissections and autopsies that privileged incisions and exposed interiors of bodies. I believe this method is closely related to the Romantic fascination with the realistic portrayal of wounded bodies and even dissected corporal fragments that are best analyzed in terms of the *status viatoris*. The extent to which premature burial and the use of the guillotine guided Bichat and others’ medical research is essential to understanding the new physiological knowledge of the body acquired by them. Reactions to these morbid events in Restoration society will also be explored by a consideration of their appearance in contemporary literature and the mounting socio-political concerns over capital punishment by guillotine.

Once I have established the *status viatoris* as a relevant concept for the Restoration period concern with the medico-scientific understanding of death, I will examine how this concept acts as a metaphor for several current issues. In one respect, the *status viatoris* may be used to describe the expressions of fear and desire for death particular to this era. This may be explained by society’s over-exposure to death via public executions, visits to the morgue, and an abundance of violent acts which became a public context for death, and subsequently, popularized the rhetoric that surrounded such violence and morbidity. Artists and the public arguably manifest a combined compulsion and repulsion to see death. Their resulting feelings could be read as metaphors of a *status viatoris* where the ambiguous emotions regarding death continue to oscillate between
desire and disgust. Even a fear of death, instilled by priests who warned of the dangers of
dying as an unrepentant sinner, brought about bizarre religious rituals designed to ensure
a departing soul’s safe passage from life to death.

These ambiguous emotions regarding death resulted in feelings of uncertainty
endured by much of society, particularly members of Napoleon’s military. They felt
uncertain of their status and their place in society after the fall of the Emperor and the
return of the monarchy which resulted in feelings of a patrimonial sense of homelessness,
a dismay with life, the government, politics, society and themselves, otherwise known as
the mal du siècle. I will suggest that these feelings, also considered an essential
component possessed by Romantic artists, are related to the dynamic and temporal
ambiguity of existence encompassed by the status viatoris.

I will be using the term status viatoris, then, to describe this state temporally
located between life and death, which is slightly different from Josef Pieper’s
interpretation of this concept as man’s life as an “inward, as it were ontological quality of
being on-the-way to somewhere else.”25 Pieper was a twentieth-century German Thomist
philosopher whose writings analyzed upon St. Thomas Aquinas’ Christian theology and
Aristotle’s Greek philosophies. This modern philosopher simplified the complex ideas
of Thomistic philosophy in his contemplation of contemporary situations relevant to man
such as love, leisure, happiness, virtue, and death. In his book, Death and Immortality,
Pieper interpreted the Thomistic philosophy of man’s quest for virtue in his definition of
the status viatoris as a “dynamic state of not-yet-being, of still unfulfilled and incomplete

25Josef Pieper, Death and Immortality, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Herder and Herder,
1968; South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine’s Press, 2000), 75, see also 73-81. I have not been able to identify
the origin or original source for the term status viatoris. Pieper is most often associated with this
philosophical idea which, due to his theological influences, leads me to believe that the term may come
from Saint Thomas Aquinas.
being that is, however, pointed towards fulfillment, completion and final resolution.”

The *status viatoris*, then, is the inevitable progress of life culminating with the final act of death that ends the “viatoric state.” The latter phrase includes a variation of the word *viator*, meaning a wayfarer or traveler, who proceeds on his journey of life, or what Pieper calls a “being on-the-way.” ‘Viatoric state’ identifies the state of existence within this movement through life. Pieper, like many other Christian philosophers, believes that upon the earthly death the body and soul are instantly separated; the body dies and the soul becomes immortal, thus ending the ‘viator.’ For Pieper this path of life toward fulfillment (or death)—a *status viatoris*—adheres to the traditional Christian view of man’s life as a journey toward the ultimate goal to return to his Creator.

I, however, suggest a reading of the *status viatoris* for France during the Bourbon Restoration era—one that locates the ‘not-yet-being’ in the stage when life is believed to have left the body and before death is confirmed. In a sense, this stage may be understood as another kind of life that exists when the vital signs and exterior appearance of a body suggest death, but in fact, do so only misleadingly, as the body may still be alive. Like Pieper, I too see my interpretation of the *status viatoris* as a dynamic state or “not-yet-being” that is “pointed towards fulfillment,” but this nineteenth-century concept is not rooted in a theo-philosophical belief. Rather, my reading of this concept is based on the medico-scientific understanding of dying and the progression toward “fulfillment” begins at the end of life and will be achieved in an actual death.

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26 Ibid., 76.
27 Ibid., 75.
Premature burials and the development of signs of death

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the compelling fear of premature burial undoubtedly had a stronger influence on medical investigations of death than any other event, disease, or concern. Occurrences of people buried alive had been known for hundreds of years through popular literature and folklore, but it was not until 1740 that the problem became a topic of medical discourse in *Quaestio medico-chirurgica...An mortis incertae signa minus Morte incerta a chirurgicis, quam ab aliis experimentis*? by Jacob-Benignus Winsløw (known in France as Jacques Bénigne Winslow). He cited several cases of premature burials that had taken place before 1714, thus he may actually have written his text around that time. Stories of people heard screaming or moaning from inside the grave, and later exhumed, were the most common examples. Typically, the exhumations would reveal a body with gnawed arms and hands, hair pulled out, and scratched coffin lids indicating the victim struggled to escape his entombment. Occasionally the person was saved or discovered alive, but the more sensationalized stories often involved necrophilia that sometimes resulted in attempted rape, pregnancies, or the awakened corpse’s discovery of thieves in the process of robbing the tomb. Dr. Winsløw asserted that it was possible someone could be mistaken for dead and then buried, since the burial laws and standard practices for interment were not overwhelmingly strict or very well-enforced. He argued, however, the causes lay not only on those careless persons responsible for burying the dead, but more on the doctors or uneducated people who incorrectly certified death. Winsløw accused the medical

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28 Jacob-Benignus Winsløw, *Quaestio medico-chirurgica...An mortis incertae signa minus incerta a chirurgicis, quam ab aliis experimentis*? (Paris: Quillau, 1740).
professionals of relying on signs of death that were liable to great error; he believed that putrefaction, defined as the onset of decomposition, was the only reliable sign of death.\(^{29}\)

In 1742, Jacques-Jean Bruhier d’Ablaincourt, relatively unknown in the medical community, translated Winsløw’s treatise from Latin into French. The result was the *Dissertation sur l’incertitude des signes de la mort*, which became a very popular and successful book published in several editions and other languages.\(^{30}\) By 1749 Bruhier revised Winsløw’s text and expanded it into two volumes in which he audaciously left the original author’s name off of the title page.\(^{31}\) This text, under Bruhier’s name, propelled Winsløw’s ideas into the medical community of Europe and the public. However, beyond Winsløw’s original text, Bruhier asserted his own campaign against premature interment and proposed new burial reforms which pushed for new morgues and a seventy-two hour waiting period before burial. In 1787 François Thiéry, influenced by Bruhier’s ideas, also suggested waiting rooms though none was ever built.\(^{32}\) Although Bruhier seemingly had good intentions to improve awareness for the crime of premature burial and encourage burial reforms, his citation of one hundred and eighty-one cases of people buried alive, most of which were fictionalized folktales that inspired the illustrations included in the English 1746 edition, created a new genre of medical


\(^{30}\) Jacques-Jean Bruhier d’Ablaincourt, *Dissertation sur l’incertitude des signes de la mort, et l’abus des enterrements, & embaumemens précipités* (Paris: Morel, le jeune [etc.], 1742. This text was translated and published in Italian (1744), English (1746, along with six illustrations), Swedish (1751), and German (1754).


literature that, if nothing else, worked to propagate these stories and inspire more fears (Figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3).

Opposition to Bruhier’s stunning text soon appeared, most emphatically in *Lettres sur la certitude des signes de la mort* (1752), by Antoine Louis, the future designer of the guillotine. He argued that *rigor mortis* and modifications in the eyes were more reliable signs of death than Winsløw and Bruhier’s contention of putrefaction. But Louis’ contention centered more on Bruhier’s and Winsløw’s accusation that doctors erred in their inability to recognize an actual death. Louis believed fault should be placed on the uneducated who wrongly certified death, not on the doctors. A contemporary doctor, Pineau, agreed with Louis that “all those who are not medical doctors do not know the veritable signs of death and do not have the insight in order to judge with certitude in all the cases.” He reaffirmed his opinion and sided with Louis again, a few pages later, when he wrote, “only enlightened and attentive doctors and surgeons have the ability to not be mistaken.”

However, Bruhier’s democratic belief that anyone could incorrectly identify a death had a large following. In the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot defined *la vie* as “opposed to

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34 Pineau, *Mémoire sur le danger des inhumations précipitées, et sur la nécessité d’un règlement, pour mettre les citoyens à l’abri du malheur d’être enterrés vivans* (Niort: Pierre Elies, 1776), 1 and 5. “tous ceux qui n’étant pas Médecin ne conoissent pas les véritable signes de la mort et n’ont pas les lumières nécessaire pour juger avec certitude dans tous les cas”; “qu’il n’y a que des Médecins et des Chirurgiens éclairs et attentifs qui puissant ne pas s’y méprendre.” Pineau’s book was released during the decade which witnessed the professional organization of medicine. The Société Royale de Médecine was established from 1776 to 1777 which instigated reforms in medical education and sought to create “uniform standards” for healthcare and qualified medical doctors across France. Several medical journals were also introduced during this period to share recent medical knowledge with other professionals. In the public realm, six new hospitals were built in Paris to improve the poor care and hygiene witnessed in the older over-crowded hospitals that continued the 17th and early 18th century medical practices. This professionalization of health reached its apex during the Enlightenment and after the Revolution when medicine became its own science and doctors acquired more freedom in education and in the study of the human body. See McManners, 51-55.
death, which is the absolute destruction of vital organs, without the ability to recover,”
and like Bruhier, he acknowledged that “one sees that in this delicate state, it is difficult
to distinguish the living from the dead.”35 This inability to perceive death gained strength
in the form of written debates over the course of the late eighteenth century and peaked
during the 1790s. Doctors, scientists, and Enlightenment philosophes debated over the
signs of death, eventually categorized as la mort réelle and la mort apparente, and wrote
official pleas to the government suggesting ways to alleviate premature burials and
institute new burial reforms that would require a doctor to officially certify death and
enforce a twelve to twenty-four hour waiting period before burial.

An integral aspect inherent in the complications of recognizing real death was
the belief that death or dying was a process. Agreement upon this, at the time, unproved
fact was evidenced by multiple statements including those written by non-medical
authors like Madame Suzanne Necker, wife of the Treasurer to Louis XVI, Jacques
Necker, and mother of Mme de Staël. She understood that “when all the signs of life
have disappeared; experience proves that the interior death has not yet ended.”36 Similar
comments such as “one never passes from life to death directly; one dies by degrees” and
“it is very probable that the vital properties are not lost at the same time” were echoed by
doctors and scientists.37 Although the phrase was not used, this concept of death as a

35 ‘Vie,’ Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers, eds. Dénis Diderot
and Jean Le Rond d’Alembert (Geneva, 1777-79), XXXV: 39. “l’opposé de la mort, qui est la destruction
absolue des organs vitaux, sans qu’ils puissant se rétablir […] On voit que dans cet état délicat, il est
difficile de distinguer le vivant du mort.”
36 Necker, Madame [Suzanne], Des inhumations précipitées, 8. “Quand tous les signes de vie sont disparu;
l’expérience preuve que la mort intérieure n’est pas encore terminée.”
37 Citoyen Thomassin, Mémoire sur l’asphyxie ou la mort apparente; avec des observations sur le danger
des inhumations précipitées (Besançon: de L’Imprimerie de la veuve Daclin, l’an XII, 1805), 4. “On ne
passe point de la vie à la mort directement; on meurt par degrés”; M. B. Durande, Mémoire sur l’usage
d’ensevelir les morts (Strasbourg: de L’Imprimerie de Levraut, 1789), 31. “il est très probable que les
propriétés vitales ne se perdent pas toutes en même temps.”
process does reflect the *status viatoris* where death is caught in the stage of not-yet-being and is on its way to completion. The end, however, was still unknown, and tragically all agreed that “nothing is less certain than the moment of total extinction of the principle of life.”³⁸ Such thoughts led one scholar to suggest that the first twelve hours of death should be seen as a prolonged sickness; one should basically assume the victim is still alive.³⁹

A lack of knowledge regarding the true moment of death formed the underlying problem in distinguishing the living from the dead that resulted in so many premature burials. Yet instead of dwelling on the moment of death, doctors and scientists developed a system of signs to rationally base their judgments of people as alive or dead. *La mort apparente* was believed to be caused by asphyxiation, although drowning, prolonged disease, epilepsy, apoplexy, and fainting could also lead to the appearance of death. By 1803 the state of apparent death became synonymous with asphyxia according to one doctor. He wrote, “there is a state between life and death…it exists from the end of agony, until real death…this state is called asphyxia.”⁴⁰ In 1822 Marin Bunoust no longer aligned asphyxia with apparent death but simply stated, “I call apparent death the intermediate state between the visible exercise of our functions, which compose life, and their complete abolition, which is real death.”⁴¹ Physical characteristics of apparent death included a lack of breathing and movement in the lungs, discoloration of the face and body, to either yellow or blue, *rigor mortis*, lack of feeling or pulse, cooling of body

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³⁸ Durande, 3. “rien ne l’est moins que le moment de l’extinction totale du principe de la vie.”
³⁹ Ibid., 36.
⁴⁰ Thomassin, 3. “Il est un état entre la vie et la mort…il existe depuis la fin de l’agonie, jusqu’à la mort réelle…Cet état se nombre asphyxie.”
⁴¹ Marin Bunoust, *Vues philanthropiques sur l’abus des enterrements précipités. Précautions à prendre pour que les vivants ne soient pas confondus avec les morts* (Arras: A. Tierny, 1826), 28. “J’appelle mort apparente l’état intermédiaire entre l’exercice visible de nos fonctions, dont la vie se compose, et leur abolition complète, qui est la mort réelle.”
According to these deceptive characteristics, the difficulty in ascertaining the occurrence of real death seemed almost insurmountable. However, putrefaction and the smell of decomposition were purportedly held by many scholars as the only true signs of *la mort réelle*.

Madame Necker, among the non-medical writers, relentlessly explored the subject of the moments between life and death – in particular, the period of “apparent death” – in an effort to eradicate the horrific crime of being buried alive. Her descriptions of the stages of death and outline of precautionary steps to administer to the dying until putrefaction appeared, bordered on obsession. Driven by her own fear of death, she lucidly analyzed the process of dying. Necker was seemingly the first to consider that “the beginning stage of death can be called its ‘agonie’.” She proceeded to outline the differences between the various stages, of which “apparent death is also a state of hidden and insensitive life, which follows ‘agonie’ and is not rare to return to. Entirely achieved death is the state of the cadaver; but there is an interval between apparent death and what one believes with certainty to be the state of the cadaver.”

Her most memorable contributions to the medical community, though, were her precautions or trials to ensure a person is truly deceased. As a seasoned philanthropist involved with the charity hospitals of Paris, she knew how to care properly for the sick, and she aggressively outlined similar vigilance for those in the early stages of death. The procedures, which should be administered to every victim, included leaving the person in a bed with the

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42 Pineau, 5; Bunoust, 35; John Bunnell Davis, *Projet de règlement concernant les décès, précédé de réflexions, 1˚sur l’abus des enterrements précipités; 2˚ sur l’incertitude des signes de la mort; 3˚sur les moyens de rappeler à la vie, dans les cas de mort apparente* (Verdun: De L’Imprimerie de Christophe, 1806), 30.

43 Necker, 9. “La mort commence se nomme ‘agonie.’ La mort apparente est encore un état de vie cachée et insensible, qui succède à l’agonie, et il n’est pas rare que l’on en revienne. La mort entièrement achevée, est l’état de cadavre; mais il est un intervalle entre la mort apparente et ce qu’on croit certaine, et l’état de cadavre.”
head somewhat raised and the body covered (but not the face). The body may be moved to another bed after twelve hours and should always be carefully observed. The victim will be watched for the first signs of decomposition, at which point it may not be dissected for another twenty-four hours.44

Madame Necker’s rules were similar to those of others who also believed in watching and waiting; one should recall the idea of ‘waiting rooms’ or ‘mortuary rooms’ posed by Bruhier and Thiéry in the mid-century. As alternatives to these passive procedures, a series of instant tests was developed that would supposedly prove if a corpse were still alive. Antoine de Baecque divides the tests into four categories: irritation, summons, scarifications, and putrefaction.45 Various techniques, often gruesome and seemingly inhumane, ranged from enemas of tobacco smoke, lashes to the body with hot towels, burning on hands and stomachs with hot irons, cutting sensitive parts of the body, and pricking with needles in areas such as under the fingernails. These trials that occasionally succeeded in waking a person suffering from apparent death also inspired the use of advanced technology, such as galvanic experiments to resuscitate the dead and to clarify the effects of the organs on each other during the revival process. As early as 1772, bodily fluid was considered by one scientist as the “material soul of the universe” that would course through the veins, and upon being electrified, would act as a life-giving entity.46 Similarly, Luigi Galvani used battery piles of zinc and copper with acid to test the vitalic power of the human fluids. After his early death, his experiments were continued by Giovanni (Jean) Aldini who named the technique “Galvanism.”

44 Ibid., 10-15.
45 De Baecque, Glory and Terror: Seven Deaths Under the French Revolution, 190.
Aldini connected electrodes to severed limbs and ran currents through the nerves to study their effects in the stimulated muscles (Figure 1.4). He also attempted to resuscitate the dead, and tried his experiments on recently drowned dogs and cats, who were electrified in an attempt to revive their vital signs and organs. The results were successful if the victim were only ‘mostly dead.’ These experiments, considered by many as unnecessary and an inhumane reactivation of a corpse, held few scientific and medical benefits. Yet, galvanic experiments continued across Europe and England during the early nineteenth century and offered a plenitude of morbid stories of animated body parts twitching, kicking, smiling, and winking at those who watched.

The impact of premature burial on nineteenth-century literature

Despite work by activists to end premature burials, tests created to certify death, and the scientific technology used to resuscitate victims, society’s fear of being buried alive did not wane after the turn of the century. It is risky to suggest the public was aware of the advancements made by doctors to distinguish the characteristics of life from death. During the Empire and Restoration, the prevalence of ‘quacks’ and uncertified country doctors suggests many people still mistrusted the medical professionals, and therefore, their ability to recognize real death. For the most part, the topic of premature burial in popular literature seemed to subside during the first three decades, except in medical scholarship. After the 1832 cholera epidemic in France, however, a wave of pamphlets, non-fiction books, and articles returned with stories of premature burials and characteristics of real and apparent death. Non-medical activists like Hyacinthe Le Guern, Jean-Sébastien-Eugène Julia de Fontenelle, and Hortense Du Fay echoed stories

from Winsløw and Bruhier in addition to more recent tales of people found alive in tombs.48 The appearance of the subject of premature burial in popular publications at the beginning of the July Monarchy suggests the fears held by society did not necessarily diminish during the Restoration but may have been superseded by other more public concerns regarding death such as the use of capital punishment.

Fictional literature from the early nineteenth century, however, provided the public with the subject of premature burial and other morbid events in the popular Gothic novels or romans noirs. Stories of vampires, ghosts, monsters, or deceased people coming back to life at night to seek vengeance on those who harmed them propagated the myths that life existed in dead bodies and inspired fear. *Frankenstein, or a Modern Prometheus* written in 1817 by Mary Shelley was probably the most famous and widely read example. Her story recounted the misfortunes of an ambitious young doctor who obsessively strove to conquer the ultimate scientific knowledge on the causes of life and the processes to reanimate life from a dead corpse. Dr. Frankenstein’s endeavor successfully exposed popular culture to the contemporary topics of vitalism and galvanism that explored similar, eerie notions of an ambiguous line that separates (or possibly does not separate) the living from the dead. This is notably recognized when Frankenstein declared that “life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world.”49 This statement recalls similar beliefs and goals that were, most likely, held by French eighteenth- and


nineteenth-century doctors at the outset of their investigations into physiology. Shelley, however, pursued the negative repercussions of this knowledge by not limiting Frankenstein’s goal to merely understanding the “causes of life” and death. He wanted to “bestow animation upon lifeless matter” and possibly “renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption.”

As is commonly known by many who have never even read this story, Frankenstein successfully achieved his goal; his monster became living proof that a compilation of corpses could be reanimated through the use of galvanic methods.

Folktales also provided some of the most extravagant and blood-curdling stories of people being buried alive. Several repeated tales would change location and nationality to make the stories more pertinent and relevant to whom they were being told, although the majority were complete fabrications or at least, exaggerations. Folktales and novels of ghosts and vampires affected a whole generation of readers who desired to know more about life after death and relished in the sublime feelings of fear inspired by novels such as Polidori’s *Vampire* (1819), Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), or Bonaventura’s *Nightwatches* (1804).

More realistic stories that included scenes of premature burials did exist, most famously Honoré de Balzac’s *Le Colonel Chabert* from 1832. Balzac’s original title, *La Transaction*, highlights the prevailing storyline of the legal transaction between Chabert and his former wife to reclaim his veteran pay and property from her. The story, however, is also a socio-political commentary on Restoration society. Balzac uses

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50 Ibid., 46 and 48.
the horrific event of Colonel Chabert being buried alive at the Battle of Eylau and his revivification in Paris as a metaphor for the social and political reception of Bonapartist soldiers during the Bourbon monarchy.\textsuperscript{53}

Balzac situates the key event of Chabert’s misfortune at Eylau when the colonel suffered a massive head injury after a heroic maneuver to win the decisive battle. He was then trampled by horses of fellow soldiers, assumed to be dead, and subsequently buried in a mass grave. In his retelling of the story to the lawyer Derville, Chabert frequently mentions how Napoleon called him ‘my Chabert’ and mourned his loss upon hearing of his death. Balzac makes reference to this personal relationship in an effort to emphasize the tragic treatment of one of Napoleon’s closest commanders as a ‘nobody’ in 1819. Chabert continues to explain how he suffered from tetanus and catalepsy, resulting in his burial in a mass grave. Eventually he awoke in darkness without fresh air but felt the flesh of dead comrades surrounding him. He successfully used a detached arm of another soldier to climb to the surface of the grave where his head, the only exposed living object in a pile of bodies, was discovered by a woman. She and her husband cared for Chabert, according to his own words, as he “hovered between life and death.”\textsuperscript{54} This self-professed observation, coupled with his premature burial, foreshadows his eventual reception and appearance throughout the story. Balzac uses death-like descriptions for Chabert that emphasize his ambiguous presence as simultaneously dead and alive. For instance, during Chabert’s first visit to the lawyer’s office, a clerk remarked, “he looks like death warmed over.” Similar thoughts, such as “the pale face, ghostly and knifelike


\textsuperscript{54} Balzac, \textit{Le Colonel Chabert}, 24.
[…] seemed almost dead” and the “colorless tone of his cadaverous physiognomy” were echoed by Derville when he first met Chabert. These statements, too numerous to recount thoroughly, imply the general reaction to the colonel, whom everyone in France assumed was dead. Even Chabert agrees with the confusion surrounding his appearance when he responds to Derville, “Am I dead or alive?” after the lawyer suggests that Chabert may have to compromise (“transiger”) with his former wife.

Balzac’s repeated references to Chabert as living within the borderland of not-quite-dead or alive underlines the idea of the status viatoris which the author appropriates as a metaphor for the socio-political injustice against Bonapartists by the Restoration government. Veterans and soldiers on half-pay, known as demi-soldes, felt displaced from society and betrayed by their country, and much like Chabert, were treated as if they were already dead. Chabert’s identity and name are only known (or recognized) by his association with the Empire and as a soldier but now the Empire has vanished. And, although he returned alive to Restoration Paris, he is, nonetheless, perceived as dead—a ghost or a corpse. This, I suggest, not only makes him an icon for the demi-soldes (literally, a half-pay soldier) since he is seen as only half present but also as one who exists in a status viatoris. In Paris, as opposed to his state of death in the mass grave, the forgotten veteran is neither alive nor dead, but situated in between life and death. Even Balzac’s original title, La Transaction, refers to an in-between progressive stage.

Although this title primarily alludes to the transaction that Chabert must make with his

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55 Ibid., 9 and 17.
56 Ibid., 34.
former wife to regain his fortune, his place in Restoration society after the Empire, and his identity, it is also a metaphor for the transaction that would resurrect him from the dead (Napoleonic soldier) to the living (veteran Napoleonic soldier).

The guillotine and the ‘instans’ of death

The guillotine also inspired new socio-political and ethical concerns about death. Initially, the guillotine brought about more questions as to how a person actually dies, and whether the end of life can be instantaneous or must involve a progression of stages. Influenced by Enlightenment ideology, this supposedly humane form of execution was intended to act as a model for an orderly and civilized society that enforced equality in death, which was considered to be painless, and justice for the people was served by a machine, not a human executioner.\(^{58}\) The guillotine originated with the 1791 Criminal Code in which the Assembly agreed decapitation would be the chosen form of capital punishment in lieu of more medieval varieties like the wheel, hangings, or the use of a sword.\(^{59}\) Dr. Guillotin suggested a decapitating machine, but it was Dr. Antoine Louis who realized the idea and first used it publicly in April 1792.

The invention of an immobile machine that would minimize grisly scenes was intended to despectacularize death; however, history would prove otherwise. Around the scaffold in the Place de la Révolution, a crowd could witness the immediacy of death with the quick slice of a blade that severed a victim’s head from their body. Since the activity was located on the scaffold platform and out of the public’s hands, older customs such as the carrying of heads on pikes in processions through the city were expected to cease. And although at first the people embraced the guillotine they soon expressed

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\(^{58}\) For a thorough discussion of the guillotine and the Terror see Arasse, *The Guillotine and the Terror.*  
\(^{59}\) Regina Jones, “Beheadings,” in *Death and Representation*, 254.
dismay at the lack of gory visual stimulation. Because of the mechanical action of the blade, there was not much to see. During the Revolution, then, the ritualistic holding of the decapitated head became the icon of triumph over the king (head of the nation) and allowed the people to revel in a new sense of justice, deeply rooted in the display of a corpse. 

Linda Nochlin, in *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*, suggests how the fragment of a corpse at the guillotine became “a positive rather than negative trope,” in particular, the head of the decapitated king, which symbolized the destruction and dismemberment of the past. 

Due to the excitement of symbolically destroying the past, irrational behavior continued to flourish in the streets with numerous murders and mutilation of bodies. Perhaps the most legendary display of the irrational occurred at the guillotine on the day of Louis XVI’s execution (Figure 1.5). A witness recorded his observations as follows: “His (Louis XVI) blood flows; people struggle to dip in it their fingertips, a pen, a piece of paper. […] one executioner sells and distributes little packets of his hair; the cord that held them is bought; everyone carries off a little fragment of his clothes or some other bloody vestige of this tragic scene.”

Despite the efforts of Enlightenment reformers, the guillotine could not prevent the people from participating in the arena of death and practicing traditional customs of collecting relics of the dead.

Notwithstanding the expected complaints of blood flowing through the streets and poor drainage near the guillotine, executions continued to be popular with the public. Its

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60 Ibid., 245-250 and de Baecque, 100-102.
frequent use (during the last month of the Terror there were on average, twenty-six executions per day) and stationary public location made the guillotine an integral part of Parisian society.\textsuperscript{63} The guillotine itself became an object of fascination. Beginning with the Terror, when the guillotine’s visibility was at a peak, people purchased miniature guillotines in the form of toys, paperweights, jewelry, hair ornaments, and even small guillotines that would slice food!\textsuperscript{64} This observation, however, does not belie the political connotations of the guillotine and the flaunting of severed heads.

The popularity of the guillotine proved that a morbid interest in death existed. This came despite previous attempts by cemetery reformers to separate the living and dead as a way to improve good morals and civility. For similar reasons the guillotine was often moved around Paris and eventually separated from the urban public. In 1795 the guillotine was relocated from the Place de la Révolution to the outskirts of Paris in the Place du Trône Renversé as a way to dissociate its reputation from the Reign of Terror. At a later time the guillotine returned to the city center in front of the Hôtel de Ville in the Place de Grève, where it remained during the Restoration. Then in another attempt to refute its past political associations and reduce its visibility, the guillotine was relegated to the Barrière St. Jacques in 1832.

By 1795 the numerous and seemingly unnecessary decapitations provoked medical professionals to reconsider whether the guillotine’s immediate severance of the head from the body truly resulted in no feeling of pain, and whether life persisted in a

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 60 and Jones, 254. See also Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David After the Terror, 6, for her discussion on the visual culture of the guillotine and the human body that became fashionable during the Directoire. Women who were sympathetic to the victims expressed their mourning through visual signs referencing the guillotine’s cut, such as red ribbons worn as choker-style necklaces, short hair cut above the neckline was known as coiffure à la victime, and red-lace dress appliqués were known as croisures à la victime.
decapitated head. The initial argument was posed by Theodore von Soemmering in his *Sur le supplice de la guillotine* and quickly followed by several French pamphlets and books, such as Jean-Joseph Sue’s *Opinion du Citoyen Sue, professeur de médecine et de botanique, sur le supplice de la guillotine* and Auberive’s *Anecdotes sur les décapités*. They questioned if the moment of death occurred when the guillotine’s blade severed the head and if it were an instantaneous death. Based upon observations at the scaffold and experiments on animals, conclusions drawn by these doctors indicated that life remained temporarily in the brain despite its being separated from the body. Sue argued that a brain could remain aware of the sensation of pain, felt at the site of severance, even if it was no longer connected via nerves to the rest of the body. He concluded that the severance of nerve endings between the neck and spinal cord delayed the relaying of synaptic impulses to the brain, and allowed it to comprehend that the head had been separated from the body. Previously, Soemmering had similarly concluded that “the head separated from the body by this form of execution, feeling, personality, and sense of self remain alive for some time, and feel the after-pain that affects the neck.” The infamous decapitation of Charlotte Corday—her face blushing after her cheek had been slapped—suggested that the sensory organs in the brain do continue to function and that Corday may have been neither not-quite-alive nor dead, in other words, in a *status viatoris*. Both Soemmering and Sue agreed that if air from the lungs were present in the larynx, the victim could proclaim his realization of being in a not-quite-dead state.

66 Sue, 4 and *Recherches physiologiques et expérimentales sur la vitalité*, 61-75.
68 Soemmering, 7, quoted in Arasse, 38.
69 Arasse, 39.
Bichat and the physiology of a dying body

The study of dying and dead bodies by doctors and scientists was above all intended to improve conditions for the dying and by default, to gain knowledge of the living body. This new physiological interest in understanding the processes of life and death encouraged other Parisian doctors to pursue similar beneficial subjects, such as nosology or the classification of diseases. Xavier Bichat (1771-1802), a young vitalist influenced by his teachers who embraced the clinical methods of research and nosography, focused on the causes and effects of diseases in his *Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort*, which was published around the time of his death in 1802.\textsuperscript{70} Although the text was not a treatise on death, Bichat’s analysis of the processes of life affected by disease said more about death than how a body continues to live. His simple and oft-quoted definition, “Life consists in the sum of the functions by which death is resisted,” confidently acknowledged his need to comprehend death in order to understand life.\textsuperscript{71} To prove this belief, he conducted experiments mostly on dead humans and animals to investigate the interdependence of systems and organs in the body, particularly how organisms died. He concluded that each organ dies individually and subsequently causes another one to fail, the order of which may vary depending on the organ affected by a disease. Essentially Bichat had proven the long-suspected belief that dying is a lengthy temporal process whereby extinction may begin in a peripheral area of the body and move towards the center, as in the case of old age, or a sudden death may begin at the heart and extend to the external body.\textsuperscript{72} “Bichat relativized the concept of death,” Michel Foucault poignantly observed, which “volatilized it, distributed it...”

\textsuperscript{70} Bichat, *Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort*.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 2. “La vie est l’ensemble des fonctions qui resistent à la mort.”
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 172.
throughout life in the form of separate, partial, progressive deaths, deaths that are so slow in occurring that they extend even beyond death itself." Bichat, however, was not alone in his view of death as a process. In 1812, Pierre Nysten, influenced by Bichat, conceived of death as a variable sequence of events. And in the same year, according to Julien Le Gallois, death could also be ascertained by the amount of feeling and strain remaining in the spinal cord.

The benefits of Bichat’s research on the physiological process of dying that privileged dissections and autopsies to acquire more knowledge were noted and discussed by Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. His discussion of Bichat’s scholarship helps elucidate the importance of the eighteenth-century doctor’s work on the eventual appearance of the *status viatoris* in the visual arts. The title of Foucault’s eighth chapter, “Open up a Few Corpses,” is borrowed from a line in Bichat’s *Anatomie générale*. Bichat used the phrase, “Open up a few corpses” to describe the need to observe the interiors of dissected corpses as opposed to following the traditional, eighteenth-century clinical method of visually studying the external body.

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75 Bichat, *Anatomie générale, appliquée à la physiologie et à la médecine*. (Paris, Brosson, 1801), xcix, quoted in Foucault, 146. “Open up a few corpses: you will dissipate at once the darkness that observation alone could not dissipate.”
76 Foucault argues that the eighteenth-century clinical method was comprised of bedside observations of the patient’s symptoms and signs followed by theoretical discussion of the disease in the classroom. Although the clinical method of medicine was present elsewhere in Europe, this did not preclude the practice of dissections and autopsies as a form of anatomical and surgical education. Dissection halls were quite common in large medical universities prior to the eighteenth century and were well documented in paintings, for example those that hung in the Amsterdam Guild of Surgeons which was located next to the anatomy hall, such as Rembrandt Van Rijn’s *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp* (1632) (Mauritshuis, The Hague) and Adrian Backer, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Frederik Ruysch* (1670) (Amsterdam, Historisch Museum).
Foucault claims Bichat instigated the medical professions’ change from clinical observation to the pathological anatomo-clinical gaze whereby the inside of corpses was believed to reveal much more about the origin or cause of a disease. According to Bichat, then, vivisections, dissections, and autopsies were absolutely necessary for advancements in pathological anatomy during the early nineteenth century.

Specifically though, Bichat focused on the study of lesions, tissues, and organs of dissected bodies to reveal the origin of disease which was considered an embodiment of truth. According to Foucault, Bichat believed: “it is at death that disease and life speak their truth,” but truth could only be known by means of the anatomo-clinical gaze acquired, as Bichat stated, if one “open[s] up a few corpses.” Although dissections were legal throughout most of the eighteenth century, new laws under the Directory provided professors of anatomy and halls of dissection with available cadavers. Undoubtedly the easily-accessible cadavers encouraged dissections and autopsies at a greater rate and acted as a kind of stimulus to observations about the ways a body passes from life to death, or experiences the status viatoris. The representation of this concept in art will be discussed in the following chapters, but it is important to acknowledge its near omnipresence in medical practices from this century.

Death in the public sphere: the guillotine, the morgue, and the White Terror

Aside from the medical idea of a status viatoris, this concept can also be seen as reflective of society’s ambivalent perceptions of dying and death. It can be argued that a sense of uncertainty stemmed from fear, desire, and miscomprehension of death. The ways in which violence and death were witnessed in public, as well as religious ideas of

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77 Foucault, 145 and 146.
78 Lesch, 55.
death and the afterlife are two topics that will be discussed to further explain the use of the *status viatoris* as a metaphor.

Public exposure to death readily appeared as one of the violent repercussions of the Revolution and Napoleonic wars. Paris alone was host to several isolated acts of violence and daily events that provided easy opportunities for society to be confronted by death. The most common form, the act of the guillotine, occurred on the recently reerected scaffold in the Place de Grève. Despite the loss of revolutionary fervor, the spectacle of the guillotine continued to exert its appeal as crowds continued to gather and watch the heads of criminals, liberals, and Bonapartists fall. In the mid-1820s, three to four executions would be held per week, averaging over a 100 per year from 1825 to 1827.79

Despite an overwhelming public approval of the guillotine, socio-political opposition to capital punishment became more vociferous after the assassination of the Duc du Berry by Louvel in 1820. His death resulted in newly instituted Ultra-Royalist policies whose primary focus on censorship was directed toward anti-royalists. The severe enforcement of the so-called emergency laws was seen as a backlash against liberals, and the guillotine became the predominant threat used to discourage potential uprisings.80 Liberal abolitionists, who opposed capital punishment and specifically the use of the guillotine, soon associated the machine with the tyrannical regime of the Terror as much as with conservative Bourbon rule. For instance, in *De La Peine de mort en matière politique* from 1822, François Guizot argued that the death penalty was

improperly and carelessly carried out on insignificant individuals as a matter of political display.\textsuperscript{81}

Although the opposition toward the guillotine may have been rooted in politics, liberal abolitionists continued to emphasize the horrific and inhumane possibility that a head could sense its own death. Numerous writings on \textit{la peine de mort} and revised editions of Sue’s \textit{Sur le supplice de la guillotine} were published throughout the 1820s. This prevailed despite the refutations by medical doctors such as Pierre Jean-Georges Cabanis, Jean Sédillot the Younger, and Réné-Georges Gastellier, who argued against the possibility of life existing after decapitation.\textsuperscript{82} Sue’s ideas managed to flourish in the 1820s and for example, appeared in Étienne Dumont’s preface to Jeremy Bentham’s treatise: “…there is reason to suspect that sensibility can last beyond the procedure: it can be preserved in the prolongation of the spinal marrow or in the brain.”\textsuperscript{83} The liberals’ arguments, however, fell on deaf ears as the popular guillotine continued to drop heads until late in the twentieth century; the only changes ever made during the use of this device merely involved moving it to different locations.

Those fascinated with seeing death during the Restoration could be easily confronted by more dead bodies at the nearby morgue. The first official morgue was located on the Île de la Cité in the Basse-Geôle of the Châtelet prison and opened in 1713. Firmin Maillard, whose text from 1860 remains the standard nineteenth-century

\textsuperscript{81} Quoted in Alan Spitzer, \textit{Old Hatred and Young Hopes:The French Carbonari Against the Bourbon Restoration} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 151.


study on the morgue, describes it as “a place where one exhibits cadavers found in the streets of Paris, and even more frequently, cadavers seized by justice, those whom despair has pushed to suicide, and those who were killed by the blows of a murderer, a place situated as we have seen at the Grand-Châtellet, in a basement that one also calls la Basse-Geôle.”

Similarly in Adolphe Guillot’s late nineteenth-century book on the history of morgues and their detrimental effect on society, he painted a grim image when he called it “a stinking pestilent place [...] where corpses were randomly thrown on the ground, without being covered.”

Despite its unwelcoming aura, like many other places of death, the morgue became “an important civic institution, a place where Parisians could stop to visit while on a stroll along the quais.”

Not surprisingly, though, the Prefecture of the Seine closed the Basse-Geôle in 1792. This may have been partially due to the goal of improved sanitary conditions of such environments or Enlightenment reforms for more humane treatment of the dead. A new building in the popular Neoclassical style of a small Greek temple was erected on the quai du Marché-Neuf on the Île de la Cité and opened in 1804. At 210 square meters in area this morgue would better serve its function as a place to display bodies for identification purposes, as well as to accommodate a greater number of visitors.

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addition to storing bodies before they were transferred to graves, this morgue was specifically designed with the intention of displaying corpses for the public to identify. Until the 1820s, it seems, the bodies were eerily positioned almost upright on marble slabs as if they were alive and standing on their feet. This is seen in an English print, *People Visiting the Morgue in Paris, Including a Soldier in Full Uniform and a Mother and Her Young Son, May 1, 1816* by Richard Brinsley Peake (Figure 1.6). On the wall behind the bodies, their clothes were hung on hooks to serve as tools for family members to identify the dead as witnessed in an illustration from the *Journal des anecdotes* from the 1820s (Figure 1.7). Visitors who came to identify bodies, however, were vastly outnumbered by those who passed through the morgue for purposes of entertainment. It was also no surprise that due to the increasing popularity of the Gothic and macabre literature in France during the Restoration the morgue became a popular place to visit. Furthermore, the improved quality of sidewalks and streets encouraged people to partake of daily strolls throughout Paris which often led them past the centrally located morgue.

The guillotine and the morgue were two forms of public entertainment that involve confronting death – specifically, the uncertainties of death. Spectators at the scaffold would have recalled the rumors of Charlotte Corday’s post-decapitation blushing face and therefore, understood that a head may still sense awareness and emotion. Even more, morgue visitors had to recognize that the bodies posed in an upright position presented the illusion of being alive instead of dead. Because of these conflicting perceptions, visitors to the morgue may have found it visually and mentally difficult to separate the illusion of life and the reality of death.
Other phenomena, such as the violence present during the Restoration, contributed to the concern with the ambiguous stages of death. Isolated beatings, massacres, and minor street battles occurred regularly for years after the Bourbons returned to the throne. Random acts across the country and Paris caused at least dozens, if not hundreds of citizens to witness violence and death. Memories of wars were also conjured by the presence of Napoleonic soldiers who were sometimes seen begging in the streets, homeless, or unemployed. Their presence invoked images of the living dead since many were handicapped, sickly, or suffering from malnutrition (or “malnourished”). Unfortunately they were also seen by the Bourbon government as icons of those dedicated to the Napoleonic Empire. Along with Bonapartists and Protestants, the former imperial soldiers became targets for retaliation during the Restoration.

A specific counter-revolutionary movement of violence against the soldiers, Bonapartists, and Protestants became known as the White Terror of 1815. Its name harkened back to the Terror of 1793 when the anti-Jacobin campaign emphasized brutality and the massacre of hundreds of people.\(^88\) The White Terror, however, began as a precautionary tactic during the First Restoration when Louis XVIII feared Napoleon would return to France. Louis XVIII sent his brother, the Comte d’Artois and his two sons, the Ducs d’Angoulême and du Berry to the Gard and Languedoc regions of southern France to organize armies with the intention of suppressing any potential uprisings of Bonapartists.\(^89\) Meanwhile, loosely-controlled groups of Catholic peasants and royalists called *miquelets* had already begun terrorizing Protestants and Bonapartists.

\(^{88}\) Furet, 160.
in retaliation for the Revolution. In the Gard, religious disputes between Catholics and Protestants had persisted for centuries. The Revolution only exacerbated the conflict when Protestants gained political and economic control over the area, prompting hatred from the usurped Catholics. Surprisingly, Louis XVIII did not remove the Protestants in power when he became king, which sparked outrage with the Catholics. And later, he refused to dismiss the Protestant administrative officials in order to avoid any disruption between the Hundred Days and the Second Restoration. The motivation behind the White Terror was equally distributed, then, between contempt felt for those dedicated to Napoleon and the Protestants.

The White Terror officially began after the failed Hundred Days and the defeat at Waterloo. As hundreds of Imperial soldiers returned home, they soon became the victims of the miquelets and verdets, the latter predominantly located in the Haute-Garonne region. By the middle of July 1815, Bonapartist troops had been attacked, imprisoned, and massacred in Toulon, Toulouse, Beaucaire, and Nîmes. Assassinations of Protestants and destruction of their country homes, crops, and farms by Ultra-royalists, often disguised in National Guard uniforms, continued throughout the summer. In August, fifteen Protestants were killed during department elections as a threat to other Protestant voters and those running for office. The towns of Uzès and Nîmes witnessed multiple massacres in public squares, including one person rumored to have been burnt alive and one occasion of Austrian troops killing several people in front of a crowd of

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90 Ibid., 44-45.
92 Resnick, 115.
thirty thousand in Nîmes. Protestant women also became victims of a particular torture. Several were publicly paddled on their behinds with a board enhanced with spikes in the shape of a *fleur-de-lys*. By 1816, estimates indicate one hundred to three hundred Protestants were killed and possibly thousands of Bonapartists were jailed and held without prosecution during the White Terror.

Although the brutality waned over the following years, memories and images of the massacres and violent deaths persisted. Death was the result of an abrupt act of aggression, instead of the more familiar prolonged death of a sick person or elder. The frequency of violent deaths became confusing. For those who may not have been familiar with war and battles, they quickly became acquainted with the lack of respect for life sustained under these conditions. They had previously known death as a private and mournful occasion; however, in the streets and squares, death became the end result of violence and hatred. Confusion as to how to feel about and understand death prevailed long after the counter-revolutionary violence subsided.

**Religious death: ambivalent perceptions of dying and death**

In the private world, however, confusion over death was not as common as the intense fear of death propagated by clergy and priests as a way to encourage devotion. According to Thomas Kselman, the clergy considered themselves “intermediaries between the living and dead” and believed they were responsible for warning man of the threat of damnation and Hell. Their sermons, whose subjects focused on such deathbed scenes as the good man versus the sinner and last judgment rites, were intended to

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93 Ibid., 117.
94 Ibid., 52.
convince the parishioners of the benefits of a heavenly afterlife.\textsuperscript{95} Similarly, newly-activated missions intended to convert non-believers concentrated on death and judgment and “became notorious for the fearsome vision of God that it carried to the French.”\textsuperscript{96}

Although Heaven and salvation were certainly included in these lessons, the clergy’s emphasis on dying as a sinner and punishment by Hell undoubtedly served to heighten lingering post-revolutionary fears.

This anxiety manifested itself in rituals performed at the time of death. For the most part, the rites attest to a lack of medical knowledge regarding the normal physiological changes when a body dies. At the same time, though, the Catholic rites emphasize the belief that a soul will separate from the body after death and immediately ascend to Heaven. Some, however, believed a deceased soul could continue living in the physical world. This soul would be trapped in the liminal space of existence between life and death or in a \textit{status viatoris}. Therefore, precautions or assistance by the living would be required to protect or guide the soul as it makes its journey to Heaven. In his discussion of nineteenth-century religious folklore in France, Kselman lists various rites meant to ensure that the deceased would have a safe journey to the afterlife. He states:

\begin{quote}
All clocks in the house were stopped, and all normal activity on the part of the immediate family was suspended. […] All mirrors and polished surfaces were turned to the wall or covered, because it was feared that the soul might see its reflection and refuse to leave. Containers of water or milk had to be emptied, either because the soul might drown itself as it stopped to drink or because the liquid was thought to be polluted by the sins washed away as it departed.\textsuperscript{97}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{95} Thomas Kselman, \textit{Death and the Afterlife in Modern France} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 69-70. Particular attention is paid to sermons from provincial areas in France.\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 71-72.\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 50.
These rites imply that a belief in ghosts and omens existed despite the prevalence of Christian faith and dreams of heavenly salvation. They also suggest that if the soul’s passage to the afterlife failed, the soul would exist in the physical world as neither alive nor dead, but rather in a *status viatoris*.

Society’s inability to understand the differences between life and death occurred because of a fear of death and an exposure to violence and death. Death was perceived as possibly immediate, but also possibly prolonged, and sometimes closely allied with life. Those who witnessed violent death on the streets may have been too captivated with the gore; those in more intimate spaces may have been too focused on grief and concern for the soul’s afterlife to recognize the actual physiological process of dying. Instead they were only able to contemplate whether a body feigned death or could return to life. The *status viatoris* became a model for the perception of death.

**The mal du siècle: society and the Napoleonic veterans**

The feelings and emotions typically associated with the *mal du siècle* could also be understood as an instance of the *status viatoris*. The ambiguous state of a *status viatoris* related to the ways in which Restoration society felt an overwhelming sense of uncertainty and melancholy. Anita Brookner argues the “awareness of loss—of status, of solidarity, of consolation—is but one manifestation of the disappointment suffered when the Imperial adventure ended.”⁹⁸ During this period, the resulting political, cultural, and religious changes added to society’s feelings of loss but also caused many to question their identity and sense of belonging. Their mental states could therefore be considered somewhat akin to the in-between and ambiguous states of a *status viatoris*.

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The aftermath of Napoleon’s return from Elba and the situation present during the Restoration initiated another identity crisis suffered by the French.99 After Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo, France paid a large indemnity that included money and land to the allies, as well as food and supplies to the foreign troops (numbering 800,000 to over a million) who occupied France.100 Peasants and townspeople, who were expected to share their crops, if not relinquish their farms and houses as shelter for the foreign soldiers, were probably the most affected. This occupation resulted in a patrimonial conundrum for the French, who questioned their sense of belonging. Their lack of Frenchness resulted in a pervasive melancholy that affected the entire country.

Napoleonic veterans epitomized the lack of identity and sense of homelessness characteristic of the mal du siècle prevalent during the Restoration. One need only recall Balzac’s fictitious Colonel Chabert, who was assumed to be dead but returned to Paris without a name, family, or home. In the end he was unable to recover his fortune, pension, and rank. Although his story is fictional, many Napoleonic veterans did suffer as disenfranchised members of society, particularly at the hands of the government. After the Bourbons succeeded Napoleon, the Restoration government immediately staffed the army with ex-émigrés to replace the lower-ranking Imperial officers and soldiers whose loyalty to the Bourbons was questioned.101 They were kept at bay by a form of military layoff known as demi-soldes or half-pay soldiers. Unfortunately, the life of a demi-solde was quite limiting:

99 A series of identity crises were suffered by the French beginning with the death of King Louis XVI and the fall of Napoleon in 1814. See Lynn Hunt, The Family Romance of the French Revolution (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) and Burton, Blood in the City.
Half-pay officers were able neither to live by their trade nor to live freely outside of it. They were obliged by law to return to their homes, that is, to the department from which they had enlisted, to await a recall that might come without notice, or never. Many had no ties to a village they had left as boys for what had become their profession and their only home. As a result, a large number of discontented unemployed veterans adopted a lifestyle of frequenting cafes, drinking, gambling, and reminiscing about their glory days in war. Day-Hickman contends their recollections of war were a way “to overcome their marginality and reinforce their self-respect with stories about their military experiences.” A quintessential example of this kind of veteran is Philippe Bridau from Balzac’s La Rabouilleuse (The Black Sheep). After Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo, Philippe, a captain and aide-de-camp, returns to live with his mother and brother in Paris. Despite offers from the Bourbon military, he refuses to accept a job in the army and instead, chooses the life of a demi-solde predominantly consumed by stealing from his family and drinking and gambling with other veterans in cafes. He even relocates to the short-lived Champ d’Asile colony in Texas for Napoleonic soldiers. This was a place for them to assume their familiar identity as Imperial soldiers, however, the settlement inevitably failed. Philippe’s interminable search for an identity and happiness after the Empire almost causes financial and social ruin for himself and his family. He exemplifies the lost Napoleonic hero set adrift during the Restoration who found it difficult to adapt to a world with no battles, uniforms, or a leader like Napoleon. Balzac’s sentimental drama, based in the reality of the Post-Napoleonic age, quite simply

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102 Spitzer, Old Hatreds and Young Hopes, 22.
depicts a veteran who has lost his identity and is unable to feel at home with his family and country.

Images and stories of Napoleonic veterans meant as reminders of their discontentedness also appeared in other artistic forms such as songs, prints, and ephemera. Popular songs by Pierre-Jean de Béranger recounted stories and described scenes of veterans as farmers and peasants living quietly yet unhappily in the country, emphasizing their disenfranchised status. The refrains were well-known, they were often sung in cafés, and as Arnold Hauser stated, they “contribute more to the undermining of the prestige of the Bourbons than all the other intellectual products of the age.”

Images of handicapped, homeless, and melancholic veterans were also available to the masses in prints and inexpensive paintings. In several prints and watercolors, Géricault, a former royalist who eventually turned sympathetic toward the demi-soldes, began to portray wounded soldiers on their return from war, handicapped, homeless, or begging in the streets. His poignant yet politicized representations of soldiers emphasize the soldiers’ uncertain social status and reflect their uneasy sense of belonging in French society. The handicapped and somewhat shabby soldier seen in Géricault’s *Le factionnaire suisse au Louvre*, 1819, is compelled to flash his Legion of Honor medal to the guard to prove his worthiness and validate his heroic war wound (Figure 1.8). The juxtaposition of the heavily frocked and dingy Napoleonic veteran and the pressed and decorated Swiss guard, particularly the veteran’s cane versus the guard’s saber, accentuates their differences in military status and place in society. The crippled and wounded veterans in these representations drew attention to the soldiers’ heroic past, yet also reminded society

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of their peripheral existence during the Restoration when they were ruled by a
government that neither cared for them nor honored their commitment to France.

Due to his lack of identity and inability to feel at home or belong in France during
the Restoration, the Imperial soldier succumbed to the greater mal du siècle. As the art,
songs, and literature suggest, the Napoleon veteran was literally and metaphorically
homeless. His former identity as a soldier was stolen and his subsequent attribution as a
demi-solde left him with literally half of an identity. In a sense, he became situated in an
ambiguous and non-existent place like a status viatoris.

Other effects of Napoleon’s defeat created similar dismay, including the future
expectations of the younger generation that were completely thwarted with his loss and
the usurpation of the Bourbon monarchy. Their disillusionment manifested itself in the
disappointment and hopelessness commonly associated with Romantic artists and writers.
Those brought up during the age of Napoleon, labeled by Alan Spitzer as the ‘Generation
of 1820,’ suffered the most uncertainty and sadness due to their impressionable age.¹⁰⁶
Years after the Restoration Alfred de Musset bore the role of spokesperson for this
generation’s mal du siècle in his somewhat autobiographical La confession d’un enfant
du siècle (1836). The introduction to his story begins with descriptions of his youthful
contemporaries during Napoleon’s reign as the “ardent, pale, nervous generation” when
the “air of the spotless sky, where shone so much glory, where glistened so many swords,

¹⁰⁶ Spitzer, “Delacroix and His Generation” in The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix, ed. Beth S. Wright
that the youth of the time breathed.” Musset claimed their future was nurtured by Napoleon’s dreams as he wrote:

they were born in war, for war. For fifteen years they had dreamed of the snows of Moscow and of the sun of the pyramids. [...] They had in their heads a whole world; they watched the earth, the sky, the streets and the highways; all these were empty, and the bells of the parish churches resounded alone in the distance.

After Napoleon’s defeat, however, their destiny became clothed in disappointment and shaped their hopeless and melancholic outlook.

The Restoration had robbed this generation of their future and Napoleon’s defeat caused a great depression, leaving them “poised between anguish and hope.” Therein lay their existence in a state of uncertainty. Delacroix, whose life was intimately touched by Napoleon—one brother died during the war, another brother became a demi-solde, and his father worked for the Emperor—successfully conveyed this feeling in a letter to Raymond de Soulier in 1821:

Try as one will, one always sees within oneself a gulf, an abyss which is never filled. One is always longing for something that never comes. There’s always a sense of emptiness, never an abundance, a full draught of happiness.

His statement, as well as his poetic and self-lamenting style, ideally captured the essence of the mal du siècle. Yet, it was Musset with the benefit of hindsight who specifically acknowledged how this generation was metaphorically and emotionally caught in a status

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107 Alfred de Musset, La confession d’un enfant du siècle, in Œuvres complètes d’Alfred de Musset (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1891), 2 and 3. “une generation ardente, pâle, nerveuse” “C’était l’air de ce ciel sans tache, où brillait tant de gloire, où resplendissait tant d’acier, que les enfants respiraient alors.”

108 Ibid., 5. “ils étaient nés au sein de la guerre, pour la guerre. Ils avaient rêvé pendant quinze ans des neiges de Moscou et du soleil des Pyramides. [...] Ils avaient dans la tête tout un monde; ils regardaient la terre, le ciel, les rues et les chemins; tout cela était vide, et les cloches de leurs paroisses résonnaient seules dans le lointain.”


viatoris. It should be noted that it is not without coincidence that he phrased his analogy in terms of life:

Three elements thus shared the life which offered itself to these children: behind them a past forever destroyed, moving uneasily on its ruins with all the fossils of centuries of absolutism; before them the aurora of an immense horizon, the first gleams of the future; and between these two worlds—something like the Ocean which separates the old world from Young America, something vague and floating, a troubled sea filled with wreckage, traversed from time to time by some distant white sail or some ship breathing a heavy vapor; the present century, in a word, which separates the past from the future, which is neither the one nor the other, which resembles both at once, and where one does not know, at each step, if one is stepping on a seed or a piece of refuse.  

Musset sensed the uncertainty of their place in the present which he described as “vague and floating.” His last phrase, however, beautifully elucidates his perception of the present (“which is neither the one nor the other”) when this generation lived in a kind of status viatoris ruled by uncertainty, disillusionment, and ultimately disappointment since, as he states, one does not know if one were “stepping on a seed or a piece of refuse.”

Above all, the origin of Musset’s mal du siècle lies in his sense of loss and a subsequent concern about death. Specifically this occurred after Napoleon’s defeat and exile, when the Romantic hero lacked a patriarchal figure, either Napoleon or the father, and even a sense of “homeland;” he became lost in a reality associated with the pain and

111 Musset, La Confession d’un enfant du siècle, 8. “Trois éléments partageaient donc la vie qui s’offrait alors aux jeunes gens: derrière eux un passé à jamais détruit, s’agitant encore sur ses ruines, avec tous les fossiles des siècles de l’absolutisme; devant eux l’aurore d’un immense horizon, les premières clartés de l’avenir; et entre ces deux mondes...quelque chose de semblable à l’Océan qui sépare le vieux continent de la jeune Amérique, je ne sais quoi de vague et de flottant, une mer houleuse et pleine de naufrages, traversée de temps en temps par quelque blanche voile lointaine ou par quelque navire soufflant une lourde vapeur; le siècle présent, en un mot, qui sépare le passé de l’avenir, qui n’est ni l’un ni l’autre et qui ressemble à tous deux à la fois, et où l’on ne sait, à chaque pas qu’on fait, si l’on marche sur une semence ou sur un débris.”

112 The phrase is deliberately ambiguous, as “vague” also means “wave.”
suffering of earth rather than the transcendental world comprised of victory and joy. The latter was represented in the spiritualism and idealism that had dominated the hearts and minds of society throughout the *ancien régime*, and the Empire and given them a sanctuary in time of need, but it, too, had been lost with the return of the Bourbon monarchy. In its place, a new affection for the physical and material world provided healing and a sense of security that was no longer available in religion or any leader, like their god-like image of Napoleon. Focus was placed upon the body that comforted through its familiarity and tangibility, but also provided a vehicle through which the artist or poet could easily explore its fragility, that is, its death. For many in the generation of 1820, this became manifest in the representation of a *status viatoris*.

This chapter has established the relevance of the *status viatoris* to the Bourbon Restoration period in terms of the medico-scientific understanding of the transition from life to death, but which can also be seen as a means to interpret and understand society’s contradictory feelings regarding death, as well as the *mal du siècle*. I argue that the uncertainty emphasized by a *status viatoris* was witnessed in several facets of society, and stems from recently-acquired medical knowledge of the differences between life, death, and the moments in between. This revelation, in conjunction with contemporary socio-political issues that emerged at the end of the Empire, brought about overwhelming feelings of dismay and confusion that manifest themselves in many actions and situations, both private and public. In the following chapters, I will discuss how feelings of uncertainty related to the confusion over the way a body dies and what actually separates life from death, collectively interpreted as a *status viatoris*, informed the
representations of death by Géricault and Delacroix, as well as prints of Père Lachaise from the Restoration period.
Chapter 2

“People Heaped up Between Life and Death”: Théodore Géricault’s Paintings of Bodies and Anatomical Fragments

This chapter seeks to explore the figures painted by Jean-Louis-André Théodore Géricault that are represented in a state located between life and death or, more specifically, the ways in which they reflect the idea of a status viatoris. I will focus on the Raft of the ‘Medusa’ and six extant paintings of severed heads and limbs, once believed to be studies for the Raft of the ‘Medusa,’ since it is in these works that his perception of death would become more visceral and in tune with death’s brutal reality. The influence of contemporary medical studies on the physiology of the dying body plays a primary role in the analysis of Géricault’s depictions of the human body in a state that defies a definite description as alive or dead. I will also consider how Géricault’s dismay with society and the government, particularly the treatment of Bonapartist veterans, as well as the prevailing ideas of the mal du siècle that are imbued with the idea of uncertainty manifests itself in his portrayal of figures and heads and limbs in likewise uncertain state between life and death. Although these paintings are not exclusively concerned with the representation of dying as a progressive, dynamic state or the ambiguousness of supposedly dead bodies, it is on this topic that I intend to focus as a way to broaden our understanding of a new construction of death in Géricault’s most famous and most mysterious paintings.

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Biography and the early work (1812 – 1818)

Géricault was born in Rouen on September 26, 1791 (d. 1824) and moved to Paris in 1796 amidst a traumatic period in French history.\footnote{Charles Clément, \textit{Géricault: Étude biographique et critique avec le catalogue raisonné} (Paris: Didiers and Cie, Librairies-éditeurs, 1868), 13-14.} Turmoil, brought on by the Revolution and subsequent wars with Austria and Prussia, as well as civil war during the Reign of Terror and the Directory, had caused violence and numerous deaths. A vicious famine also ruthlessly spread across France and took hundreds of lives, particularly in Rouen, between 1794 and 1797.\footnote{Boime, \textit{Art in an Age of Counterrevolution}, 117.} Although he was young, his childhood was consumed by an exposure to famine and death. The constant presence of death and his personal familiarity with it, having lost his mother at the age of nine, helped shape his understanding of its gravity. It would seem that his awareness of death at an early age made him open to contemplation of the complexities of dying, and eventually, its representation in his paintings. This can be seen in his attention to morbid details and his exploration of what lies beyond the borderline that separates life and death.

His career began with visits to Carle Vernet’s studio in 1808 and continued at Guérin’s studio as an apprentice for six months in 1810.\footnote{Clément, 20-21.} Unsatisfied with his training, he pursued his own education by copying Old Masters at the Musée Napoléon (contemporary name of the Musée du Louvre) and through self-taught knowledge of the classics (although traditional classical and religious subjects would play only a minor role in his œuvre). As part of the ‘Generation of 1820,’ he came of age during the Napoleonic
Empire imbued with stories of heroes, battles, and legendary deaths which became some of his most influential subjects.  

Prior to the Raft of the ‘Medusa,’ Géricault displayed these themes most poignantly in scenes of Napoleonic soldiers. At his first Salon in 1812, he introduced the public to his love of horses and military men with the Charging Chasseur (Figure 2.1). In the painting, the officer sits atop a rearing horse while, without reason, he looks backward with fearful eyes, and curiously holds his sword down toward the horse, not in a fighting or charging gesture. Painted during a successful moment in Napoleon’s late war, Géricault’s portrait of an officer seemingly fails to express the idea of victory and instead suggests a sense of crisis as that suffered by the aristocrats because of Napoleon’s quests.  

The painting’s success was seemingly based upon the promise of Géricault as a young and upcoming artist of military scenes and most likely influenced by the idealist portrayal of an Imperial officer during a moment of heroism in 1812.  

Two years later he submitted Wounded Cuirassier, a pendant to the Charging Chasseur that reflected a rather gloomier climate for Napoleon as opposed to the supposedly victorious painting from 1812 (Figure 2.2). In 1814 the Imperial army lost thousands in a horrible defeat at Moscow. As news spread to France, an atmosphere of

119 Originally titled, Portrait équestre de M. Dieudonné.
120 Jules Michelet argues the soldier dwells more on death than victory, as he recorded in his Journal [1828-1848], [July 20, 1840], ed. Paul Viallaneix, Vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 332, quoted by Bruno Chenique in “On the Far Left of Géricault” in Théodore Géricault. The Alien Body: Tradition in Chaos, eds. Serge Guilbaut, Maureen Ryan, and Scott Watson (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 1997), 92. “He turns toward us and his thoughts are...This time, it is probably to the death. Why not? [...] he had met death several times before...”; Norman Bryson similarly argues that Géricault’s portrayal of the officer’s masculinity “is shown in a state of strain and fatigue” that stems from his unfitting military costume and misshapen body. The Charging Chassuer then does not imply victory or success but rather the trauma experienced by society as a result of Napoleon’s egoistic pursuits. See Bryson, “Géricault and Masculinity,” in Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations, ed. Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994),236-259.
121 Artists were allowed to exhibit previously shown paintings at the Salon in 1814.
sadness and loss engulfed society, including Géricault who considered himself a devout royalist. His feelings are reflected in this later painting that depicts a soldier who looks back in fear as he leads his spirited horse from the battlefield. Interestingly, the man lacks any sign of a physical injury despite the title’s description of him as *wounded*. Norman Bryson succinctly observes that Géricault instead presents “woundedness, a general sense of hurt and fear” that identifies a more cerebral representation of the latest defeat and overall *mal du siècle*.\(^{122}\) Despite the affective qualities of a monumentalized defeated soldier and the sad demeanor present on the his face, Géricault ultimately conveyed the story through the use of the word “wounded” in the title and not via any physical debilitations.

Lorenz Eitner suggests Géricault was inspired to paint the *Wounded Cuirassier* after seeing the tired and disabled soldiers return from war in March 1814. Eitner cites the memoirs of Louis Véron to support his argument. Véron described seeing soldiers who “dragged their exhausted horses by the bridle. There was blood everywhere...many of the soldiers were forced to walk, despite leg and foot wounds, supporting themselves on their sabers...On both sides of the boulevards, spectators seated in chairs looked on...”\(^{123}\) It is plausible that Géricault may also have seen similar scenarios. Affected by depressed soldiers, he created an image that reflected defeat and dismay as opposed to the victorious *Chasseur*. Charles Clément’s description of the *Wounded Cuirassier* in 1868

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\(^{122}\) Bryson, 240.

addressed this idea but more poignantly: “all is lost; heaven itself, a mournful look, is only lit by a gleam at the horizon. The sad days have come.”

Soon thereafter, Géricault painted a series of Napoleonic soldiers and trumpeters, for example, Trumpeter of the Hussars (1814-15, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass), Trumpeter of the Polish Lancers (c. 1814, Art Gallery, Burrell Collection, Glasgow), and Three Mounted Trumpeters (1813-14, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), somewhat reminiscent of the sad atmosphere in the Wounded Cuirassier. These small paintings never attained much public recognition, although they attest to his interest in portraying depressed and unemployed veterans. From this point onward, Géricault’s paintings began to reflect the emotions suffered by him and society during a period of political turmoil, and an unwavering sense of insecurity after Napoleon’s defeat.

Privately Géricault expressed discontent and possibly anger in a group of twenty drawings included in his sketchbook roughly dated to 1815. Scenes of cruelty, lust, and violence reveal an erotic or even a masochistic sensibility quite opposite to his finished paintings of soldiers and copies of Old Masters. For example, in one drawing (Figure 2.3), a nymph struggles with a satyr as the two are wrapped around each other; their sexual tension is coupled with a hint of violence and anger. Another drawing of an executioner strangling a prisoner with a rope also exhibits similar qualities that cause an uncomfortable feeling in the viewer who ponders the imminent violence or action (Figure 2.4). These drawings are marked by their Michelangelesque, robust bodies which indicate his penchant for a strong physicality or material presence of the human body. It

124 Clément, 66. “tout est bien perdu; ciel lui-même, d’un aspect funèbre, n’est éclairé que par une lueur à l’horizon. Les jours mauvais sont venus.”
is noteworthy, too, that Géricault’s figures are not like the idealistic bodies of Neoclassicism but rather the manneristic figures of Michelangelo whereby their muscular, curvaceous forms are the tools through which he expresses their violent and often erotic themes of imminent, life-threatening action.125

Géricault’s preference for this type of subject matter seems to have increased during his year-long visit to Italy in October 1816. While in Rome he witnessed public executions and sketched the gruesome scenes.126 Clément asserts that Géricault intended to use one of his drawings of an execution as a study for a large painting, yet the only extant evidence of such work is two drawings of related scenes. *Execution in Rome* (Figure 2.5) exemplifies Géricault’s interest in classicism not only through the Michelangelesque body, but also as the executioner uses an axe and wears traditional Roman garb instead of contemporary clothing. Like many political images from the Revolution, the drawing shows the executioner holding up the decapitated head. He repeated the head in the margin of the drawing as he developed the ultimate horrific facial expression. Violence is not shown, yet the display of the severed head forces the viewer to understand that brutality has already happened. Géricault opted to present the aftermath—the result of the violence—which is devoid of any anticipation and leaves only a sense of loss of life.

It seems surprising that Géricault would choose to portray a body in an incomplete form while he was in Italy amongst the ancient art and Renaissance paintings

125 During Géricault’s trip to Italy (September 1816 – October 1817) he was most excited to see Michelangelo’s work. His first experience was in Florence where he saw and made sketches of the Medici tombs. In Rome he was awestruck by the Sistine Ceiling and sketched a large part of the *Last Judgment*. Although he was familiar with Michelangelo’s work from black and white engravings, his first-hand exposure to the paintings and sculptures must have certainly broadened his understanding and appreciation of the Renaissance master’s skill, technique, and style, particularly in his representations of the human body. See Clément, 81-83.
126 Ibid., 81.
that were rife with ideal male bodies. It is worth noting, too, that of his Italian works

*Execution in Rome* is one of the few with human figures; he principally painted the
Barberi horses and other animal genre scenes. He was clearly influenced by the spectacle
of executions and desired to represent its savagery without the action but imply it through
the aftermath. Despite the numerous executions that occurred in Paris, it is also curious
that he first sketched these events in Rome. His paintings and drawings prior to the
Italian trip may have been prejudiced by his exposure to Napoleonic soldiers, the vicious
activities that occurred during the One Hundred Days and the White Terror, and the
revival of the Restoration government. Once removed from France, he seems to have
become more aware of everyday scenes of cruelty and death.

His state of mind may also have been a factor in his choice of dreary subjects
while in Italy. He supposedly left Paris as an escape from his secret torrid love affair
with his aunt. In an oft-quoted letter to his friend Pierre-Joseph Dedreux-Dorcy,
Géricault expressed his feelings of loneliness and hopelessness when he wrote, “Now I
am disoriented and confused. I try in vain to find support; nothing seems solid,
everything escapes me, deceives me. [...] If there is one thing certain in this world, it is
our pains. Suffering is real, pleasure is only imaginary.”¹²⁷ He suggests that he exists on
an ambiguous plane between pleasure and pain as he drifts throughout his life on this
earth. Since he did not keep a journal, we can only surmise his emotions through his
personal letters, which convey feelings indicative of the *mal du siècle*.

Soon after he returned to Paris in late autumn of 1817, Géricault became more
interested in social and political issues which would eventually lead him to consider the

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 90. “Maintenant j’erre et m’égare toujours. Je cherche vainement à m’appuyer; rien n’est solide,
tout m’échappe, tout me trompe. [...] S’il est pour nous sur terre quelque chose de certain, ce sont nos
peines. La souffrance est réelle, les plaisirs ne sont qu’imaginaires.”
story of the Medusa as a viable subject for a painting. He frequently read newspapers and pamphlets that contained anti-Bourbon sentiments and, more directly, was inspired by his friends Dedreux-Dorcy, Horace Vernet, Colonel Bro, and other ex-Bonapartist officers who kept him abreast of the poor and unfair treatment of Imperial soldiers by the Restoration government.\textsuperscript{128}

Two current events, one politically controversial, provided him with subjects that turned his artistic œuvre in a new direction. He created a series of narrative compositions on a violent murder, as well as a documentary-like portrait of a dead man, in which he developed pictorial tactics he would eventually use in the Raft and the anatomical fragments.

The murder of a former magistrate, Fualdès, in 1817 in southern France became the subject of newspaper headlines in the spring of 1818 during the suspects’ trials. Unfounded rumors that Fualdès was assassinated by Ultra-Royalists led to greater awareness of the story and a political outcry.\textsuperscript{129} According to Clément, Géricault intended to use the story as the subject of a major painting, although a final composition never materialized.\textsuperscript{130} He did, however, complete a series of drawings on Fualdès including the events of the murder, the disposal of the body, and the escape of the murderers, that, according to Eitner, “bear a certain resemblance to published lithographs of the event and, in their technique of pictorial narrative, reflect the style of contemporary


\textsuperscript{130} Eitner, Géricault: His Life and Work, 156.
journalistic imagery.”\textsuperscript{131} Each scene is comprised of either classically nude or clothed figures who dramatically act out the story as it unfolds. Their overtly brute and muscular physiques, particularly in the scene of Fualdès as he is dragged into the house, fill the entire composition with theatrically violent movement (Figure 2.6). Inspired by the classical bodies in the examples of ancient and Renaissance art seen during his Italian trip, Géricault developed passionately choreographed scenes that mimicked the chaos of the actual event. In the seven narrative drawings, he successfully demonstrated his ability to realistically portray multiple figures undertaking acts of savagery.

A second event which caused Géricault to confront and depict tragedy and death occurred in the summer of 1818. By chance, Géricault and Colonel Bro visited the latter’s friend, General Lelletier, who had just shot himself while lying in bed. Suicide had become of interest to the medical community at this time and was purported to be a “possible accident of madness caused by the disintegration of the social order.”\textsuperscript{132} For Géricault, however, suicide could be seen as a direct result of Lelletier’s feelings of loss, in addition to what was seen as other former Napoleonic soldiers’ feelings of helplessness in society. Inspired by the raw immediacy of the event, Géricault drew a portrait of the general as he lay on his bed with his wife’s scarf wrapped around his head and the pistol lying next to him, which he then used as a model for a painting (Figure 2.7 and 2.8). In the painting, Lelletier’s death is not outwardly apparent as his eyes and mouth are still open and the subtle darkish red area on his chest and torso are the only indications of blood or maybe a wound meant to symbolize the fatal gunshot. Thus, Géricault presented Lelletier as confusingly alive and dead in ways that he would soon replicate in paintings

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 156.
\textsuperscript{132} Chenique, Géricault, la folie d’un monde, 194. “un possible accident du délire occasionné par la désintégration de l’ordre social.”
of severed heads and limbs and the *Raft of the 'Medusa.'* His documentary style required careful observation to achieve the obvious naturalism of the scene, as well as a necessarily morbid fascination to factually represent the end of a life. Eitner claimed Géricault’s personal conflicts and heartache allowed him to portray this image of suicide because he could relate to Lelletier’s feelings. Although this is possible, I argue that the drawing and the small oil painting (collection of G. Renand, Paris) reveal much more about Géricault’s interest in depicting a realistic and unidealized death; its approach to the idea of human suffering becomes documentary.

Both of these projects mark Géricault’s attraction in 1818 toward violent and contemporary subjects that highlight the act of death and the extent to which the body appears to die or seem dead. In the Fualdès series, he experimented with individual scenes that could present a charged moment and call attention to the precarious instant when a body dies. By contrast, in the Lelletier portrait, the artist completely focused on the body, and with prudent examination presented a realistic portrayal of death. I would suggest that these two incomplete projects, which combined his interests in contemporary social or political topics, in the human body struggling at the precipice between life and death, and in subjects that allowed for the close scrutiny of bodies in the service of an unsurpassed realism, helped develop and hone his fascination with the story of the *Medusa’s raft.* Most of all, the Fualdès and Lelletier images are further examples of Géricault flirting with the representation of the main subjects who ambiguously pass through, or seem to be caught between, two states of existence—life and death—which, as will be discussed, are best and most effectively demonstrated in the *Raft* and its associated paintings.
Raft of the 'Medusa' and its representation of the transition between life and death

Géricault learned about the horrific story of the Medusa in November of 1818 when he returned from Italy, although the event had taken place two years earlier. The French frigate Méduse was traveling to Senegal in July 1816 with over four hundred passengers when it ran aground on the sands of Arguin off the coast of Africa. The ship’s officers and captain, an inexperienced naval officer appointed under the Restoration, boarded the limited number of lifeboats, which left one hundred and forty-nine passengers, comprised of one woman, artisans, and low-ranking officers, while the vast majority were soldiers from the colonial regiments, to fend for themselves. Those left behind constructed a raft from the wood of the grounded ship and were then pulled by the other lifeboats for three days until the raft had noticeably inhibited their progress. As a result, the raft and its crew were released to float out to sea. With limited provisions, passengers soon began to suffer from thirst and hunger which eventually led to sickness, anger, fighting, murder, starvation, insanity, and for some, cannibalism. After great turmoil for thirteen days, only fifteen survivors on the barely-held-together planks of wood were discovered by another French ship named Argus.

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133 It is possible that Géricault was aware of the story before he left for Italy in 1816, although the actual date of his departure is unknown. Guérin wrote a letter of introduction for Géricault to a Florentine dated September 20. If he left on or around that date it is likely that he was familiar with the Méduse from the recent newspaper articles. Most historians have taken for granted that Géricault was introduced to the details of the wreck after he returned from Italy in the autumn of 1817. His immediate circle of friends, including Horace Vernet, the Scheffer brothers, Colonel Bro, and other former Napoleonic veterans, most likely discussed current political topics, such as the recently published book on the Méduse by Alexandre Corréard and Jean-Baptiste-Henri Savigny. See Eitner, *Géricault: His Life and His Work*, 164; Clément, 81, 112, and 129-130.

The story of the shipwreck and heartrending events that took place upon the raft reached France the following September of 1816. Initially a short excerpt of the story was released in *Le Moniteur universel*. The Prefect of the Police, Elie Decazes, who wished ill upon the Minister of the Navy, François Dubouchage, and desired to humiliate him, leaked a copy of survivor Henri Savigny’s more detailed account to the *Journal des débats* which was published on September 13, 1816. A more complete account by Savigny and fellow survivor, Alexandre Corréard, *Naufrage de la frégate “la Méduse” faisant partie de l’expédition du Sénégal, en 1816*, was printed in November 1817 to increase knowledge of the shipwreck and the degrading treatment of the survivors by the Bourbon government. As the story spread, the public immediately blamed the incompetent captain, Hugues Duroy de Chaumarey, a former royalist émigré who escaped from France in December 1790 and had not been onboard a ship for over twenty years. He was eventually appointed by Dubouchage because of his familial connections to the court and because the government was trying to make amends to the ex-émigrés, which further ignited anger toward the Bourbon monarchy. Regardless of the public’s opinion, the monarchy successfully hushed the outcome of the captain’s sentence of three years in prison, which he never served, and avoided payment of any compensation to the victims.

Three years after the wreck, Géricault unveiled his monumental painting entitled *Scène du naufrage*, most commonly referred to in English as *Raft of the ‘Medusa,’* at the Salon of 1819 (Figure 2.9). There remains little doubt that Géricault intended to spectacularize the horrific event through his grandiose display of writhing nude bodies in

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135 The first publication of the story by Henri Savigny was immediately translated into English and published in the *London Times* on September 17, 1816.
various displays of dejection and anticipation. Yet the painting was also a reminder for the Salon visitors of the government’s errors in the handling of those held responsible for the catastrophe and the survivors. Thus, the public and critics easily recognized the subject as the raft borne from the Medusa and later abandoned. The reviews included positive and negative comments, many of which were clearly biased towards their authors’ individual positions. Some critics claimed the painting represented the artist’s political stance and his negative opinion of the government, while other critics simply viewed the work as a devastating scene of a dreadful real event.\textsuperscript{136} One described it as a “horrible spectacle.”\textsuperscript{137} Despite the seemingly politically-charged subject, many were still able to focus on the artistic characteristics of the compositional arrangement: the colors, the dominating darkness, the confusing multitude of figures, and the notion of uncertainty prevalent within the image.

In the \textit{Raft of the ‘Medusa,’} Géricault devised subtle visual metaphors to underscore the moral chaos of the horrific event experienced by those on board the raft. The first example appears in the composition’s lack of a central focus. After experimenting with different ways to organize the scene, Géricault settled on placing the raft on a diagonal, set amidst a rough ocean surrounded by a dark, ominous sky. The front of the raft dips toward the viewer in a way that invites him to participate in the scene. Twenty castaways, mostly nude or partially clothed, sit, lie, or stand across the raft. In various poses, they stretch and lean toward the upper right of the group where a man, who is hoisted onto another’s shoulders, waves a piece of cloth in an attempt to gain the attention of a ship located far on the horizon. The center of the painting is comprised

of a mass of figures animated with gestures and movement that almost makes it impossible for the viewer to rest upon any one of them. In opposition to prevailing academic principles which emphasized a centrally-placed subject, Géricault’s confusion of jumbled figures resulted in a composition devoid of any single focal point. Gault called attention to this in his description of the painting when he stated, “you have no focus; you have no center.”

This lack forces the viewer to search throughout the composition for a focus, leaving him suspended between modes of observing and participating.

The scene depicted—the sighting of the Argus—also presents uncertainty for the viewer and participant. Géricault arrived at this subject after sketching numerous events that took place upon the raft: mutiny, cannibalism, sighting of the Argus, hailing a boat during the rescue, and the empty raft after the rescue. He settled on the sighting of the Argus since it best expressed a moment of “tension and contrasts” filled with anxiety, hope, and despair—qualities and emotions familiar to the castaways while on the raft.

Although the Argus is central to the subject portrayed, curiously, Géricault made it infinitesimally small and seemingly very distant from the raft. He placed the Argus on the horizon line—the liminal space between here and there—as if he wanted to accentuate the seemingly slim chance that it might become a rescue ship. In fact, the ship did appear and then slowly went out of sight until the following day. According to Savigny and Corréard, some of passengers believed they saw the Argus, while others resigned themselves to accept the possibility that it must have been a hallucination, which

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was not unlike other occasions when a supposed rescue ship was sighted. In his *Notice sur la calenture, maladie particulière aux gens de mer*, Fournier de Pescay claimed that calenture particularly affected sailors in tropical climates. Savigny directly quoted from, though never cited, de Pescay’s treatise on calenture in his own book about the lack of nutrition of those aboard the raft. He claimed many of the crewmembers suffered from calenture, which caused several unnecessary deaths, such as those who threw themselves overboard while experiencing a vision that they were on land. Albert Alhadeff suggests that knowing that the castaways suffered from calenture, which caused their disorienting hallucinations (like possibly seeing the *Argus*), may explain Géricault’s tiny depiction of the *Argus* as an “absent presence” in the far distance. It would seem, then, that Géricault’s negligible mark indicating the *Argus*, coupled with the castaways’ belief that the ship could have been a hallucination, underscored the uncertainty inherent in the *Raft*, and supports Alhadeff’s conclusion that the painting is defined by “indeterminacy and ambiguity, doubt, vacillation, and ambivalence.”

Louis Batissier, Géricault’s earliest biographer, noted similar ideas of doubt, specifically concerning the transition from life to death, in his interpretation of the painting as “a troop of men piled on these frail planks of salvation between the sky and water, between life and death.” Géricault purposely situated three groups of figures on the raft, each designate a different state of existence. The figures on the lower left and

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140 Hallucinations may have been caused by calenture, a disease that most likely affected those on board the raft, according to Fournier de Pescay and Savigny. See Alhadeff, 45-83.
141 François Fournier de Pescay, *Notice sur la Calenture, maladie particulière aux gens de mer* (n.p.), see Alhadeff, 54.
142 Henri Savigny, *Observations sur les effets de la faim de la soif: éprouvées après le naufrage de la frigate la Méduse, en 1816* (n.p., 1818), see Alhadeff, 54-55.
143 Alhadeff, 47.
144 Ibid., 80.
across the foreground, some of whom are truncated by the raft, appear to be dead. The central group stretch and reach toward the upper right, as if they are straining to remain alive, while the figures furthest to the right have the most life. As the viewer reads the painting from lower left to upper right, following the compositional lines, he perceives a conversion from death to life, or from despair to hope.

The center of the composition traditionally holds the subject of most importance. In the center of the Raft, Géricault has placed the group comprised of a sitting man with a blue turban and three others who kneel and stretch their bodies and gaze toward the gesturing men on the upper right of the scene. These sitting and kneeling figures are those who seem to awaken from the dead and strive to come alive, or, in other words, exist in the borderland between the end of life and the beginning of death. The three figural groups in various states of life and their arrangements can therefore be understood as symbolic of the status viatoris: the entire scene reflects the idea of one ambiguously moving toward something but not yet having arrived. Here the movement proceeds from death toward life.

My argument focuses on Géricault’s portrayal of figures who are not quite alive or dead but somewhere in-between which he achieved in several ways. Géricault was undoubtedly aware that those on board the raft suffered from starvation and illness as he thoroughly read Savigny and Corréard’s account of the journey, and probably met the authors sometime during November 1818. He also interviewed several survivors. According to Clément, Géricault created a “veritable dossier” of information about the raft so that he could effectively translate the horror and despair with a significant degree of realism yet he purposely chose not to portray the castaways with such morbid
afflictions. To this end, he fictionalized the scene. The majority of men on the raft appear healthy, with distinctively muscular physiques not suggestive of malnutrition; the artist implies their defeated status in other ways. Without replicating the exact horror of the survivors’ physical appearance at the moment they sighted the Argus, he suggests the idea of their suffering by representing them in various states of death and life.

Regardless of Géricault’s intentions, the critics focused on what they assumed were the dying or dead bodies, and primarily the four foreground figures: the torso on the far left, the recumbent “son,” and prostrate torso, and the torso and legs of a man on the far right. General observations about the painting typically cited the dead figures, and even exaggerated their presence. In La Revue Encyclopédique, a writer referred to the painting as “a heap of corpses from which one turns away.” An even more embellished review came from a critic writing for the Gazette de France who observed “about twenty cadavers” while another journalist, more lackadaisically reported that “some cadavers, thrown on the boards of the raft, complete this vast composition.” A critic from Le Journal de Paris overstated how some had “already fallen into putrefaction,” by which he meant that they had been dead for a while. Seemingly in agreement, a writer from La Gazette de France opened with the comment that “there is nothing of a drop of blood circulating in these twenty people,” and later reiterated this belief, observing that “death has already begun to devour” them.

146 Clément, 129.
150 Anonymous, La Gazette de France, August 31, 1819, 1050. “Il n’y a pas une goutte de sang en circulation dans ces vingt personnes” and “la mort aurait déjà commencé à dévorer.”
Occasionally the (supposedly) dead figures were designated to specific areas, such as “the livid cadavers stretched on the poorly jointed beams.” And in *Le Moniteur universel* an anonymous writer further elaborated this identification: “to the right, on the first level, lies a cadaver, whose body enveloped by a shroud is still on the raft, whereas his head floats on a wave. To the left, between two dead bodies, a young man gives back his last breath on the knees of a warrior who consumes a somber grief” (Figure 2.10). Auguste-Hilarion Kératry also referred to the young man as “ready to take his last breath.” This man leaning back on the knees of the older man, usually identified as the “son,” is the only figure who seems to have caused some doubt in the reviewers. Although they used similar language in their descriptions of him the critics could not commit to writing if he was alive, dead, or somewhere in between. Gustave Jal, on the other hand, stated in his review of all the figures but undoubtedly looking at the “son,” suggested that the “dead bodies or the unfortunate are ready to take their last breath,” meaning the figures in that sense, reminiscent of Jacques-Louis David’s *Marat à son dernier soupir* (1793, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels), were pointed toward death but not quite dead.

In her study on the *Raft of the ‘Medusa,’* Grigsby specifies how this perplexing portrayal of bodies derives from the figures’ extremities where “the confusion of parts [...] makes it difficult [...] to distinguish between those who feel and those who do not,

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152 T., “Beaux-arts. Salon,” Troisième article, *Le Moniteur universel,* October 12, 1819, 1323. “À droite, sur le premier plan, gît un cadavre, dont le corps enveloppe d’un linceul, est encore sur le radeau, tandis que sa tête flotte dans l’onde. À gauche, entre deux corps morts, un jeune homme rend le dernier soupir sur les genoux d’un guerrier qui consume une sombre douleur.”
between limbs which are living and those which are dead.”¹⁵⁵ She claims that the Salon critics witnessed this “lack of differentiation among the living and the dead, among the animate and inanimate” which they found to be “deeply disturbing.”¹⁵⁶ Yet in the criticism, almost no one questioned the bodies’ state or pursued detailed characterizations that would verify and convince their readers if the figures were, in fact, dead.

Clearly there was little agreement on how to describe and discuss which figures were alive, dying, or dead. I argue a more logical and discerning observation was made by Gault who stated that Géricault had presented “people heaped up between life and death.”¹⁵⁷ Gault may have meant that literally there are figures who appear more alive and others that seem dead. His statement may also be interpreted figuratively, as if people are portrayed “heaped” or “jostled” in a state ambiguously hovering between life and death. Somewhat similarly, I argue Géricault created bodies that appeared to be both dead and alive to the medically uneducated salon audience who did not know that despite physical appearances “the vital principle of life will be able to subsist, though the organs will have ceased to practice their functions.”¹⁵⁸ Bichat, a leader in physiology, studied how a body dies in stages or more specifically, in succession from one organ to another. Other doctors soon became aware that “the vital properties are not lost at the same time” and that death proceeds from the “circumference toward the center” of the body.¹⁵⁹ The belief that life does not end abruptly and a delayed, ambiguous period of time exists

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¹⁵⁵ Grigsby, 217.
¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 220.
¹⁵⁷ Gault de St. Germain, Choix des productions de l’art les plus remarquables exposées dans le salon de 1819, 27. “des gens entassés entre la vie et la mort.”
¹⁵⁸ Davis, 35.
before death occurs uniquely resonates with the ambiguous moments that separate life and death.

Géricault may have been familiar with the contemporary medical ideas upon starting the Raft after he moved his studio near the Hôpital Beaujon. He, along with the artists Charles Émile Champmartin and Alexandre Colin, frequented the hospital’s morgue and sketched its current collection of cadavers. Knowledge of the medico-scientific studies on death would most likely have appealed to his current interest in depicting the malnourished, dying, or dead figures on the Raft, which makes it probable that through the doctors and interns at the hospital, Géricault was introduced to the practice of dissection, in addition to the subjects of vitalism and physiology, particularly its focus on the temporal delay that separated life from death. Clément may have referenced this delay, also known as the state of agony, in his description of Géricault sketching cadavers at the morgue. He described how Géricault “followed with ardent curiosity all the stages of suffering, from the first attack up to the agony and the traces that it imprints on the human body.” In Clément’s interpretation, then, it was as if Géricault purposely pursued the ways in which he could represent the progression of death as the body dies from the exterior to the interior, such as using the qualities of la mort apparente.

As I discussed in the first chapter, la mort apparente describes a body that appears to be dead but whose organs and vital principles are still alive. The term was a

161 Necker, 9.
162 Clément, 130-131. “allait suivre avec une ardente curiosité toutes les phases de la souffrance, depuis les premières atteintes jusqu’à l’agonie et les traces qu’elle imprime sur le corps humain.”
product of eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century medical studies which sought
an explanation for premature burials and later into the physiological effects of the
guillotine; that is if a head still senses life after being separated from the body. The
categories of la mort apparente and la mort réelle were developed to distinguish between
the misleading and conclusive qualities of the dead. Despite the characterization of these
differences, most doctors and scientists noted the difficulty to recognize a dead body or la
mort apparente after long periods of direct observation and claimed it was even more
“impossible to suppose the gravedigger capable to distinguish an apparent death from a
real death.”163

One of the main causes of la mort apparente was asphyxiation, “a disease which
has all the appearances of death [...] no pulse, nor respiration, nor feeling, nor
movement.”164 It could be caused by drowning, epilepsy, and fainting, as well as choking
and suffocating which would stifle the carbon dioxide in the blood and impede the body
from breathing. Although it may be futile to argue that these four humans suffered from
asphyxiation, since it would be impossible to prove, it is not impossible that Géricault
portrayed the four prone figures in a state of apparent death similar to one who has been
asphyxiated.

The “equivocal signs” of la mort apparente caused by asphyxiation also include
“the rotting of the corpse, the cooling down, the suspension of air, the yellow color or
blueish face, the failure of the pulse in the arteries, the worsening of the eyes, etc.”165
Obviously since no one seems to be speaking in the painting it is impossible to say for
certain if the four figures in question are breathing, even though the mouths are open on

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163 Durande, 64.
164 Pineau, 5.
165 Davis, 30. “signe équivoques”
the two figures on the left. The complexions on all the foreground figures do have a
deathly glow with livid and pale coloring somewhat akin to the yellow and blueish colors
associated with asphyxiation. Not surprisingly this quality did not escape Étienne Jouy
who, in *La Minerve française* noted that “this green and livid tint [...] on two of the
bodies at one end of the raft, announces that they have ceased to live for several days.”¹⁶⁶
I presume he was referring to the man shown truncated on the far left and the “son” lying
diagonally to his right. One could also suggest this is true for the man lying face down,
whose left arm stretches out toward the viewer and the victim whose head and shoulders
are plunged in the water. Géricault painted their skin in a lighter, paler tone than the
other figures which he may have learned by observing corpses and severed bodies as they
decompose. Yet it was also possible he understood that a livid complexion was believed
to be one of the most fallible signs of death.

These same figures appear motionless and silent as they wait for their end. Their
stillness is especially noticeable when compared with those in the central group which
Eitner described as having “awakened from death-like torpor by a sudden excitement,
expressing the torment of their resurrection in a complicated play of gestures.”¹⁶⁷ In a
sense, Eitner has suggested that the central group has been revived and come back from
death. By contrast, the supposedly dead figures are devoid of any motions or gestures;
their bodies fall limp without movement. Prior to the nineteenth century this was
probably the most common characteristic of *la mort apparente* and had prompted
Madame Necker, amongst others in the 1790s, to propose tests that could confirm death,
since according to her “the cessation of movement, total impassibility, is only exterior death.”

Another misconception of a motionless body was to confuse death with sleep. After many observations of humans and animals, la mort apparente revealed a “state where man, without appearing alive, is not even dead, truly comparable state to those where animals found sleeping and numbed by the cold.” This point is illustrated in Géricault’s Portrait of a Young Boy Sleeping (collection of M. Dubaut, Paris) painted in the years after the Raft (Figure 2.11). In the painting, the boy’s head is tilted back as if he has fallen asleep while in a sitting position. His gently closed eyes and mouth present a relaxed, peaceful expression reminiscent of a tranquil slumber. However, if the painting was turned to the left and the boy’s head leaned back toward the ground he would equally appear dead. His quiet demeanor in sleep is perfectly suited to express the passivity of death. Though it seems outrageously simple and maybe illogical, is it possible that the “son” and the person face down on the raft could have been misconstrued as dead instead of asleep?

Drowning could also produce la mort apparente that would include the familiar death-like qualities of a lack of respiration or movement, pale coloring, and coldness of the body. In Sue’s Sur le supplice de la guillotine, he noticed how some people “who have accidentally and momentarily been [...] drowned, are able to give an account of what they felt, in this unfortunate state, that they had conscience [...] of drowning.” They were able to return again to life after having exhibited the same signs as one who

\[168\] Necker, 9.
\[169\] Bunoust, 28.
\[170\] Sue, Opinion du citoyen Sue, 12. “Les personnes, par example, qui accidentellement et momentanément ont été [...] noyées, peuvent rendre compte de ce qu’elles ont éprouvé, dans cet état fâcheux, puis qu’elles ont eu la conscience de [...] la noyade.”
has been asphyxiated. I argue the figure in the right foreground whose head is plunged below the water as his body loosely hangs on the raft has most likely drowned. Bodily wounds or scars would suggest that he has been beaten or murdered; however, his body lacks any evidence of violence. This figure was based on Preparatory Sketch for ‘Raft of the Medusa’ of Drowned Man who is portrayed in the same prone and upside down position. (Musée des Beaux-Arts et d’Archéologie, Besançon) (Figure 2.12). Géricault did two other painted studies of the head of a drowning victim, Sketch of a Drowning Man (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen) and Portrait of a Drowned Man (St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis) (Figure 2.13 and 2.14). The painting in Rouen shows the profile view of a young man with his head tossed back. Only his neck, face, and hair have any degree of finish, yet they are still executed in a rapid sketch-like impressionistic manner with bold thick and hasty brushstrokes. His mouth is slightly agape as if he has taken his last breath while his eyes have already closed. A similar portrait in St. Louis is likewise shown with the head tossed back, practically parallel with the sides of the frame, and turned toward the front but his eyes and mouth are both open which could also imply the state of rigor mortis. Overall, this painting has an even lesser degree of finish and is undoubtedly a study or sketch, noticed by the thick, rapidly applied flat brushstrokes throughout the composition. Since Géricault did not describe these heads as drowned, one can only recognize this as a drowning victim by its title, which was probably given based upon its similarities with the Rouen painting and the sketch from Besançon. It is rather curious that the figure on the raft who could have drowned lacks a head since Géricault had experimented and portrayed the head of a drowning victim on two occasions and one full figure sketch. The drowned body in the Raft was supposedly one
of the final two added to the painting after it was hung in the Palais Royal during the preliminary staging prior to the Salon. Géricault may have added the headless drowned figure and the man on the far left (also truncated) for aesthetic reasons to fill out the composition, which subsequently provided the viewer with a visual point of access into the painting. It is even more fascinating to consider that the drowning victim who initially engages the viewer is shown in the misleading state of *la mort apparente*.

Maybe to the dismay of many critics and viewers the majority of Géricault’s figures, who are presumed to be dead, show no signs of *la mort réelle*. On only one occasion did he portray *la mort réelle* that would be recognized by putrefaction and witnessed by the smell of decomposition, *rigor mortis*, or rotted wounds. Grigsby observes how the man with a truncated torso on the far left has a swollen putrefied hand and an open triangular-shaped wound on his chest that suggests his body has begun to decompose.¹⁷¹ These details are difficult to see because of the darkened bitumen in the painting but they are, nonetheless, likely evidence of decomposition and thus, a corpse. However, a corpse still treads the boundary of ambiguity: “the cadaverous presence is such that it simultaneously occupies two spaces, the here and the nowhere. Neither of this world nor entirely absent from it, the cadaver mediates between these two incompatible positions.”¹⁷² In other words, a dead body, if truly a corpse, can physically and metaphorically exist in a *status viatoris*.

I contend Géricault’s depiction of the uncertain moments between life and death was a means to express his own feelings of uncertainty. From his personal letters and observations made by his contemporaries we know that he suffered, like many others,

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¹⁷¹ Grigsby, 215.
¹⁷² Elisabeth Bronfen and Sarah Webster Goodwin, “Introduction,” in *Death and Representation*, 12.
from the “profound spiritual crisis” known as the *mal du siècle*.\(^{173}\) In the previously quoted letter written by Géricault to his close friend, Dedreux-Dorcy, while in Italy (he was seemingly depressed and possibly homesick), the artist revealed himself as suffering in an ambiguous world of insecurity where “nothing seems solid, everything escapes me, deceives me.”\(^{174}\) This incertitude about life may have stemmed from his current issues with his family and the affair he had just ended with his aunt. She was married to Géricault’s uncle, a major financial and emotional supporter of his artistic career since his mother’s death. Some historians have ventured to guess that Géricault may have gone to Italy to escape this inevitable family crisis or, if nothing else, to remove himself from a socially-embarrassing situation.

It is also impossible to discount Géricault’s sense of dismay and uncertainty as a result of the contemporary political and social circumstances in France. His prints and drawings of unemployed Napoleonic soldiers and *demi-soldes*, public executions, and acts of violence are evidence of Géricault’s awareness of the social inequalities and the effects of a very conservative, often intolerant government.\(^{175}\) In light of his previous work, the *Raft of the ‘Medusa’* may be seen as a negative comment upon the treatment of former Napoleonic soldiers who were replaced by unqualified officers. Or Géricault may have also wanted to remind the public of the poor treatment received by the survivors at the hands of the government with this monumental statement at the public salon.

Benjamin Constant claimed that in *Adolphe*, a novel contemporary with Géricault’s *Raft*, he intended to portray “the principal moral maladies of our age, the

\(^{174}\) Clément, 90, full quotation in op.cit., no. 97.
fatigue, the uncertainty, the lack of strength, the perpetual analysis that saps the spontaneity of every feeling.” I see Constant’s ideas in harmony with the attitudes and points of view present in the *Raft* and suggest Géricault may have had similar intentions. He succeeded in accomplishing this through his use of the body as a vehicle to articulate the wavering emotions of human suffering, specifically the anxiety of death and the sense of dismay experienced by those on the raft. Only through a body that possessed the conflicting qualities of the living and the dead could he effectively demonstrate the ambiguous physiological stages between life and death as a way to draw attention to the idea of uncertainty. The *Raft* has been described as a painting which “testifies to the spirit of his age; it states that incertitude affected Géricault and his peers. It highlights the fact that there was a tremendous and moving force afoot, and that this force was the advent of ambiguous and equivocal pluralities. Divisions, doubt, and ambivalence were paramount tropes for Géricault.” I argue these tropes materialized most convincingly in his portrayal of bodies that ambiguously appear in a *status viatoris*.

The paintings of anatomical fragments: heads, arms, and legs

The ultimate expression of this concept may actually appear in Géricault’s paintings of severed heads and limbs. In these paintings, which date between 1818 and 1819, he merged his fascination with anatomical accuracy and aesthetic composition, resulting in extremely precise, albeit often gruesome, celebrations of the physiological details of dissected body fragments. His decision to paint limbs and heads that appear alive and dead may have been inspired by the recent medical interest in dissection, Bichat’s new theories, and scholarship by doctors who observed that life may still be

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177 Alhadeff, 43.
present in a decapitated head. The formal and stylistic appearance of the fragments offer some indication of Géricault’s purpose; however, his close attention to the severed areas or cuts presents the key point of entry into this discussion. I argue that like Bichat’s belief in the need to look inside corpses for answers, Géricault placed some focus on the interiors and the cuts to identify the moment when life and death meet. I will use the post-structuralist idea of “the cut” put forth by Jacques Derrida, a subject that has not previously been discussed in Géricault scholarship, to dissect and analyze these paintings.

Clément saw these paintings as studies for the Raft of the ‘Medusa’ in 1868, yet since then art historians have broadened their perceptions of these images to include a greater range of explanations for their creation. Eitner focused on a more psychological interpretation, stating the paintings “served him as an emotional stimulus.” He suggested that Géricault created the paintings as a way to envelop himself in the ambiance of death to assist in his development of the Raft rather than factually recording dead objects. In 1843 Batissier simply stated that Géricault was “intent on facing death so that he might represent its ravages,” meaning that he yearned to understand the differences between the living and the dead body, not necessarily based on emotions but particularly focusing on the colors of decay and the facial expressions, wrinkles, and contortions produced by rigor mortis to better portray the transition of life to death. However Kallmyer, amongst many others, believes the paintings should be considered as autonomous and finished works of art. According to her, the paintings most likely reflect Géricault’s political stance on capital punishment, the practice of dissections, and the

178 Eitner, Géricault: His Life and Work, 183.
179 Louis Batissier, quoted in Courthion, 42. “voulant avoir la mort en face pour reproduire les ravages de la mort.”
cultural fascination with *gothic noir* and the macabre.\(^{180}\) These opinions and observations are all valid and significant to their periods of art historical scholarship. My interpretation of Géricault’s paintings is more centered on their relationship to contemporary culture and the social climate of the Restoration. Therefore, like Kallmyer, I would insist on the importance of contextual analysis of the heads and limbs and not focus on these paintings as studies for the *Raft*. In this discussion they are rather perceived as independent works of art that equally explore the human body and the contemporary construction of death.

However, the case for the fragments as studies for the *Raft*, is at best slim but arguable. Grigsby suggests the arrangement of limbs in *Anatomical Fragments* (Musée Fabre, Montpellier) is directly translated in the *Raft* as the arm of a black man in the center of the composition, who lies across another man’s leg whose foot protrudes toward the viewer (Figure 2.15).\(^{181}\) This specific organization of limbs between the two paintings is beyond a simple coincidence. It is also worth noting, too, that Géricault added two halves of bodies just prior to the *Raft*’s Salon debut. He included the torso and legs of a man in the near right foreground and the head and torso of a man on the far left. As I previously stated, this may have been an aesthetic decision to fill in the composition. Quite possibly, though, Géricault was inspired by the prospect that a severed body with a visible borderline could impart a more emphatic representation of the passage between life and death.

The stories surrounding Géricault’s trips to the Hôpital Beaujon and Hôpital Bicêtre prove he was interested in studying severed heads and limbs in early 1818.

\(^{180}\) Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, “Géricault’s Severed Heads and Limbs: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Scaffold:” 602. See her footnote no. 7.

\(^{181}\) Grigsby, 215.
Géricault was certainly not the first artist to pursue the study of fresh corpses as art objects; one need only to recall Leonardo da Vinci’s numerous anatomical drawings.

Germain Bazin, in his Catalogue raisonné, quotes a poem by Johann Caspar Lavater on studying corpses at the morgue that was supposedly dedicated to Girodet-Trioson, who was also known to study the dead, exemplified in his painting Le Docteur Trioson expirant (Musée Girodet, Montargis). However, Géricault’s paintings have become the most well-known examples as a result of this activity and therefore, identify him with this tradition. Lavater poetically narrates the artists’ journey into the sublime world of the morgue. He writes:

With the painter let us visit the lugubrious hospitals,
Filled with fumes, vapors insalubrious [...],
There, observing nature weakened, the painter
Comes to surprise death with the secrets of life,
He finds them in bodies broken by pain,
When their vital spirits, languid and spent,
Are ready to throw off their earthly envelopes.¹⁸²

Written prior to Géricault’s endeavors at the morgue, Lavater’s text perfectly paints an image of the Romantic artist visiting a hospital or morgue; he implies the adventure is much more than simply a recording of dead bodies—it is about understanding life and death.

Unlike his contemporaries and most of his predecessors, Géricault continued his fascination with corpses in his home studio. According to Clément, doctors and interns supplied Géricault with body parts to take home. He allegedly kept the severed heads

and limbs in his studio and on the roof’s gutter as a way to delay their decomposition for weeks and months, turning his place into a morgue, much to the dismay of his friends and visitors.\textsuperscript{183} In the privacy of his “den of horrors,” he recorded the colors and shapes of dismembered parts by candlelight, forever identifying himself as the owner and painter of such gruesome and macabre objects.\textsuperscript{184} As he began to paint, Géricault could have spoken the words uttered by Dr. Frankenstein upon creating (reanimating) his monster: “I collected the instruments of life [paint brushes?] around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing [severed heads and limbs?] that lay at my feet.”\textsuperscript{185}

Coincidentally, Mary Shelley’s novel was written between 1816 and 1817 and published in 1818 just prior to Géricault’s undertaking at the morgue; it was not published in French until 1821.\textsuperscript{186} Géricault’s curiosity and practices with severed body parts immediately calls to mind the labors of Frankenstein. To acknowledge only the scientist and artist’s participation in the Gothic and \textit{genre noir} would be to miss the ways in which these two creators understood the benefits of knowing life through death and how they believed in the potential of the anatomical fragment to assist in their comprehension. Dr. Frankenstein’s explanation of the early stages of his project to create his monster seems as if it could have also been spoken by Géricault to rationalize his own pursuit to paint severed heads and limbs. Frankenstein claims: “To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I became acquainted with the science of anatomy: but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body.” He goes on to say, “Now I was led to examine the cause and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{183} Clément, 130-132. \\
\textsuperscript{184} Alhadeff, 10. \\
\textsuperscript{185} Shelley, \textit{Frankenstein: A Modern Prometheus}, 51. \\
\end{flushright}
progress of this decay, and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel-
houses.” As the story goes, he, too, carried dead limbs back to his lab (studio) for
further use. Frankenstein and Géricault followed similar journeys, and, I argue, they
achieved, in a certain way, the same result. They each created an object and an image
that possess characteristics of the living and the dead and seemingly exist in the moments
between life and death.

In each of their projects (the creation of a man and paintings), they followed
similar purposes: to invoke the presence of life in a dead object. Frankenstein employed
pieces of corpses to re-create life in a new giant form of man using galvanic methods,
even though the details of his actual process were never described. Géricault used paint to
portray dead heads and limbs in such a way that instills them with a renewed sense of
life, either through their coloring, expressions, or their lack of wounds and severed areas
that marks their status as severed or dissected body parts. If Géricault’s intentions were
to use these paintings from the morgue as educational studies for the Raft of the
‘Medusa,’ the better to understand and portray the living or dying body, then, in a sense,
he, too, acted similarly to Frankenstein as a creator striving to reintroduce the idea of life
from a lifeless (fragment of a) corpse.

Curiously, for both men, the severed body offered specific knowledge that they
were not able to glean from a whole corpse. In this sense, they were not unlike anatomy
and physiology students whose education took place in the morgue and on the dissecting

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188 Interestingly, Frankenstein compares his evolution in making his creature to seeing the final results as a
day from death to life: “I was like the Arabian who had been buried with the dead, and found a passage
to life.” He refers to the fourth voyage of Sinbad the Sailor, who is buried alive with his dead wife, from
*The Thousand and One Nights*. Sinbad follows a faint light which leads him back to the world of the
living. Frankenstein’s analogy suggests that, like his monster, he proceeded from the darkness of death,
maybe a state of ignorance, toward life or, for him, a state of enlightenment and knowledge—particularly
on the physiology of the human body. Ibid., 47.
table where they studied muscles, organs, the nervous system, and diseases by opening and observing the interiors of corpses. In 1798, the Directory granted professors of anatomy and students free access to corpses for dissections, which legalized the practice as an integral component of medical education. Although students often worked on whole corpses, dissections provided the opportunity to dismember the bodies. The resulting fragments, along with the guillotined heads of criminals, were then used to analyze specific areas; they were also employed in experiments like galvanism for the students to observe the effects of reviving an isolated section of the body. Individual body parts also appeared in medical illustrations as a way to magnify the interior and identify small portions, thus making them instrumental in the teaching of anatomy and physiology.

Not surprisingly, Géricault’s paintings are somewhat akin to contemporary medical illustrations even if they were not intended as didactic images. Inken Knoch compared Géricault’s Severed Heads to John Bell’s anatomical illustration Two Severed Heads (plate III) from his L’Anatomie des os, des muscles et des articulations (1794, Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Berlin) (Figure 2.16 and 2.17). Bell, a physician and author of two other books on anatomy, illustrated the majority of his images.189 Ironically, many of his drawings appear, like the two heads, as rather contrived representations of body parts that are aesthetically rather than informatively displayed. Therefore the comparison between Bell and Géricault is somewhat logical and expected. Knoch asserts that Bell’s drawing and Géricault’s heads share “the same expressive style, which suggests an intense form of the passage from life to death” and reasons that even

189 Bell supposedly did not trust artists to effectively and intelligently portray the physical characteristics of the human body without the addition of their stylistic sensibilities.
though Bell’s illustrations were for medical students, Géricault was probably aware of these images. Since the artist seems to have had an interest in medical studies while painting the *Raft*, and moved in the circles of doctors and interns, one could assume he was probably familiar with Bell’s book.

The compositional arrangement of Géricault and Bell’s heads is strikingly similar, yet there are some noteworthy differences between the two images. Both sets of heads are placed on cloth covered blocks. The heads are tilted upward, one more than the other in each image, and one head is slightly turned to the side. In Bell’s illustration this was obviously meant to reveal more details of muscles and ligaments inside of the neck. If the print was reversed, as it would be in the initial drawing, the positions and directions of all four heads would be almost identical. Considering the numerous options of how one could depict a head, this fact suggests that Géricault must have at least seen Bell’s prints. However, Géricault’s heads differ from Bell’s at the neck’s opening, where the head was severed from the body. The anatomist concentrated on exposing the muscles and ligaments in the neck, whereas Géricault paints the opening like a dark bloody red wound. Bell clearly intended to portray a realistic, educational depiction of the neck’s anatomy, while Géricault seemingly had no desire to represent a pedagogical illustration of severed heads. His heads were aesthetically conceived with a thick impasto of bold flat colors and a delicate touch of macabre horror that would completely negate their use as an educational tool. This does not dismiss, however, the medico-scientific spirit, in the extent to which Géricault alludes to the physiological phenomena of the body inherent in his paintings.

In the Stockholm painting (Figure 2.16), Géricault portrays a male and female head placed on a soft, undulating white sheet situated in a mostly nondescript room with a dark background on the left and white on the right.\(^{191}\) The girl’s head, according to Clément, was that of a living model, “a little hunchback girl who posed in the studios.”\(^{192}\) Eitner finds it difficult to accept this identification since her head has “every appearance of death in expression, complexion, and the bloody cut at the throat” which seems to underscore her perplexing depiction.\(^{193}\) Her eyes are closed yet her lips are slightly separated as if she is still breathing. She looks comfortably asleep with her head gently resting on her ‘pillow.’ Many art historians have remarked on her sleep-like appearance, though no one has made the connection that a deep slumbering sleep was considered a sign of \textit{la mort apparente}.\(^{194}\) One should recall how numerous people were buried alive as a result of asphyxiation which caused them to appear dead when they were merely asleep or in a coma. Her pale white and gray complexion certainly alludes to her supposed dead state; it has convinced Kallmyer who believes the girl’s head “has a more deathly livid complexion than its truly life-less male counterpart.”\(^{195}\) However, unless skin has begun to putrefy or decompose, the greenish and livid tint associated with death actually indicates \textit{la mort apparente}, which would suggest that she is not really dead.

\(^{191}\) Jean-François Debord, “À propos de quelques dessins anatomiques de Géricault,” in \textit{Géricault: Dessins & estampes des collections de l’École des Beaux-Arts: École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts}, 25 novembre 1997 – 25 janvier 1998 (Paris: École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, 1997), 60. All of Géricault’s severed heads and limbs are wrapped or placed upon a similar sheet. Debord points out the cloths have generated a multitude of interpretations; however, he believes they are sheets of linen used to transport the dissected heads and limbs in the morgue or dissection amphitheatre as a way to protect the carrier’s hands.

\(^{192}\) Clément, 304. “\textit{une petite bossue qui posait dans les atelier.}”


\(^{194}\) On her likeness to sleep, see Stefan Germer, “Pleasurable Fear: Géricault and uncanny trends at the opening of the nineteenth century;” 163; Athanasoglou-Kallmyer, “Géricault’s Severed Heads and Limbs: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Scaffold;” 614; and Knoch, 152.

Yet the viewer is constantly aware of the bloody crevice on her neck where her head was (supposedly) severed from her body: a logical indication of death.

According to Clément, the male head was from a criminal housed at the Hôpital Bicêtre who suffered his fate at the guillotine. He is depicted with an open mouth from which he screams a silent cry of anguish as his body suffers the blow from the guillotine’s blade. I see pain; however, other historians have more embellished readings of his face. Stefan Germer for instance, interpreted the man’s expression as “changing between horror at death and orgasmic moaning.” He identifies this conflict as the uncanny that is indicative of the artist’s fear of sexual difference. To read the scene of two heads lying on a marital bed as a metaphor for an erotic heterosexual encounter or Géricault’s issues with sexuality would miss the more complex statement on the contemporary intrigue with physiology and the artist’s interest in reproducing the stages of dying and death. The man’s open mouth may be in the process of breathing or talking to the viewer, thus exemplifying Sue and Soemmering’s belief that life continued after a head had been decapitated. The latter claimed that “the head separated from the body by this form of execution, [?] feeling, personality, and sense of self [could] remain alive for some time, and feel the after-pain that affects the neck.” Géricault presses upon this point and the use of the guillotine for capital punishment by unabashedly showing the viewer the place where the heads have been cut from their bodies. Anatomical illustrations used for education would often use a cloth to veil the severed area in a show

196 Germer, 165.
197 Soemmering, 7, quoted in Arasse, 38.
of modesty toward the human body; however, Géricault has positioned the cloth under the heads to undauntedly reveal the sliced necks.\textsuperscript{198}

Like his companion, the male head also possesses the conflicting characteristics of the living and the dead. His skin is a combination of death-like paleness and dark blotches tinged with bloody red wounds which seem to be symptomatic of abuse. His nose, cheek bones, jaw, and forehead similarly appear contorted or crooked as if his post-mortem head had been mistreated. His expression may reflect the rigidity of \textit{rigor mortis}; however, his neck wounds continue to ooze blood that leaves stains on the sheet. Yet his livid skin may indicate \textit{la mort apparente} and he may appear to be alive as he screams in pain, but his head is completely severed from his body and his central nervous system. He is thus shown with multiple aspects that indicate both life and death.

The male head is undoubtedly the same one depicted in the drawing \textit{Four Studies of the Severed Head of a Guillotined Man} (collection of M. Dubaut, Paris) comprised with the same head shown in profile and three three-quarter views (Figure 2.18). Géricault used cross-hatched and short, wispy strokes on the beard, hair, and neck of the drawn head much like the head in the Stockholm painting. In each sketched study, the man’s mouth is agape and his partially open eyes, though droopy, stare in various directions. Géricault drew a general impression of the face shaped by rough shadows and heavy pencil lines. His goal, it seems, was to achieve the most affective view that could reveal suffering particularly at the moment of death. The head in the painting is based on the head seen on the bottom right of the drawing, a three-quarter view with the face turned slightly toward the front which would provide the greatest amount of information.

A related painting, *Head of a Guillotined Man* (The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago), portrays the same male head as in the Stockholm painting and the drawing of four severed heads (Figure 2.19). Bazin is hesitant to attribute this image to Géricault because of its coloring and style; however, based upon many similarities to his other paintings I tend to agree with The Art Institute of Chicago, which now accepts this piece as Géricault’s. In *Head of a Guillotined Man* the head is propped on a wooden neck block and gently rests on a sheet, slightly tinged with blood, and colored with light browns, pinks, and grays. These colors and the bloody sheet draw attention to the dark red and brown colors around the opening at his neck. Short, wispy brushstrokes that emulate a beard or scruffy hair are reminiscent of the brushwork on the male head from Stockholm. A noticeable difference in the Chicago painting appears in the man’s expression, which has subtly changed to a quieter demeanor indicated by his closed mouth and sad or tired sagging eyes. His side-lying position suggests a restful sleeping head; however, the livid green colors of putrefaction seen on his skin, known as the only acceptable characteristic of *la mort réelle*, persuade the viewer to think he must be dead.

I believe this painting shows the head in a latter stage of decomposition which would accord with Clément’s statement that Géricault kept this head in his studio for fifteen days. Géricault’s naïve attempt to emphasize or exaggerate the man’s morbid state through the use of hyper-green and gray colors on the face does seem somewhat contrived and unrealistic, especially in comparison with *Severed Heads*. This may be the reason some historians have found it difficult to attribute this painting to him. However, the prominent appearance of the severed neck and the thick, impasto brushwork used is reminiscent of the cuts on the necks portrayed in the Stockholm painting. I am not

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199 Bazin, VI:38 and 156.
arguing that this severed head convincingly depicts the same characteristics of *la mort apparente* as in the Stockholm heads but I do believe that, in this painting, Géricault intended to depict the transition of a head as it progresses from life to death. In the end, he seems to have settled upon the representation of a moment that is closer to death than life.

Another representation of a pair of heads *Couple United in Death* (collection of Alain Delon, Paris) has been classified as ‘attributed to Géricault’ (Figure 2.20).\(^{200}\) Without a first-hand observation it is difficult to judge its authenticity; however, based upon close scrutiny of the owner’s photographic reproduction and by comparisons with Géricault’s other known images, I believe it could very well be authentic. There are many similarities to his other known paintings in terms of subject matter, brushstrokes, and colors. Of course, there were other artists working at the same period who painted severed heads. Until the painting’s authorship is proven otherwise and considering that it has been included in the majority of his *catalogue raisonné*, I feel it is proper to discuss this work as “attributed to Géricault.” If it is not by him, I believe my reading of this painting is still pertinent to a discussion of his work as it widens the scope of my argument to include other artists who were also interested in the medico-scientific understanding of the body and the depiction of the moments between life and death.

*Couple United in Death* shows a male and a female head placed horizontally on a table; they would appear to be asleep and snuggling on a bed. Her head almost rests on his (non-existent) shoulder, which is covered by a white piece of cloth. This same cloth, or more appropriately a death shroud, wraps around her head like a bonnet and covers his

face. His only visible facial features are his swollen closed eyes. His dark yet gray speckled hair is fluffed and coiffed, quite the opposite of a head that has been lying down. The female head’s eyes are also closed and her lips are slightly separated as if she is breathing, similar to the girl in the Stockholm painting.

Upon closer inspection one notices that the cloth is not actually covering their bodies but instead hides the absent bodies. A lump in the sheet just below the female head would seem to be her right shoulder; however, the details of the folds and its size actually reveal emptiness under the cloth. This observation is confirmed by the fact that the heads lie on what appears to be a dissection table, noticeable by its cold stone-like quality and the curved lip at the upper left of the composition. We assume these must be severed heads, possibly from the guillotine, that are currently being used for medical research. Although they sit on a dissection table, the heads strangely lack the gory evidence associated with this practice, let alone any signs of death. Only the stains of blood smeared on the table, seen in the upper third portion of the scene, hint of this macabre environment.

This enigmatic painting emphasizes absence through the use a cloth to convey the uncertain status of these heads as alive or dead. The cloth hides their lack of bodies and the wounds on their necks that would otherwise prove they have been decapitated. The viewer only sees two heads snuggling in a very life-like manner and apparently asleep. Yet they are placed on a dissection table stained with blood which obviously negates the idea of life. In this painting, Géricault (or the unknown artist) did not use the characteristics of la mort apparente or show a hideous gash at the neck to depict decapitated heads. He portrayed two heads (ambiguously severed) on a table whose lack
of bodies and non-existent severed necks evoke the possibility that these heads could be alive. Because of this unknown, the heads should be described as existing in a status viatoris which more accurately reflects their ambiguous state as somewhere between the living and the dead.

Besides Géricault’s heads, his paintings of severed arms and legs also portrayed current medical ideas surrounding the characteristics of la mort réelle and la mort apparente. Three similar paintings dating from 1818-1819, all entitled Anatomical Fragments (Musée Fabre, Montpellier; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen (owned by the Louvre); and collection of Robert Lebel, Paris) portray the same two legs and one arm seen from three different angles approximately 160° apart (Figure 2.15, 2.21, and 2.22). Anatomical Fragments (Montpellier) (Figure 2.15) was described by Clément in his catalogue as “one of the most beautiful made by Géricault” and is unquestionably accepted as a Géricault.201 The authorship of the other two paintings is somewhat debated by art historians and critics. At a session during the Géricault conference in 1992 held in Paris, Régis Michel, Inken Knoch, and Jean-François Debord dismissed the idea that the artist would have painted the same subject in succession from three different angles.202 However, Grunchec reproduced both paintings with brief descriptions in his catalogue and had not questioned the attribution in his revised edition from 1991.203 Eitner lists Anatomical Fragments (Rouen) (Figure 2.21) as Géricault’s, as well as the Lebel example (Figure 2.22), stating the latter “seems worthy of Géricault, and its style and technique support this attribution. It must be assumed to be a variant, not described by Clément, but mistakenly identified, by its recent owners, with Clément’s no. 107,”

201 Clément, 304. “l’un des plus beaux qu’ait faits Géricault”
202 Debord, 60.
203 Grunchec, 114.
which is the painting from Montpellier. He goes on to remind his readers of Champmartin’s now lost painting of the same subject and arrangement that was in the Lehoux collection, which coincidentally included the painting in Rouen supposedly by Géricault. He is, more or less, suggesting the painting in Rouen may be the lost Champmartin (at some point attributed to Géricault but now believed to be by an unknown). Interestingly, Bazin argues that the painting owned by Lebel should be attributed to Champmartin, not Géricault. Other art historians have merely ignored the issue and discussed the paintings in Montpellier and the Lebel collection as by Géricault. In my opinion, it is possible to imagine Géricault painting the same subject from three different angles, especially considering how he sketched the same body and heads from multiple views. All three paintings of limbs are relatively similar in style, execution or brushwork, and colors but are slightly differentiated by their degree of finish. In consideration of this ongoing discussion on proper attribution, I will focus my attention on the painting at Montpellier and discuss the Rouen and Lebel images as “attributed to Géricault” to act as supporting examples of my argument.

Géricault painted amputated and dissected arms and legs to observe the physical characteristics of the limbs, like the heads, as they slowly progress from a state of life to death. In a candlelit room, he painted Anatomical Fragments (Montpellier) showing two legs (calves and feet) and one arm which is severed at the shoulder. Around the upper arm is a swatch of linen tinged with blood. Its almost central placement leads the viewer toward the bloody area on the shoulder where a knife has severed the arm from the rest of its body. The two feet are placed upside down so the bottoms are exposed, while the arm,

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204 Eitner, Géricault’s Raft of the Medusa, 168.
205 Ibid., 168.
206 Bazin, VI: 151.
bent at the elbow, gently cradles one of the legs, and its subtly cupped hand makes a tickling gesture toward one foot. This intertwining embrace uneasily engenders a life-like quality to the life-less limbs. Knoch, Germer, and Kallmyer have described the limbs as performing an erotic or intimate heterosexual embrace; yet I disagree that gender is a pivotal issue in this painting. The limbs embrace by default because they are haphazardly piled on top of one another. If anything, they are asexual and genderless—they do not reproduce, love, or even move. I do, however, believe that their embrace, most importantly, suggests an emotional human characteristic of feeling and thus, life.

Conflicting interpretations of the limbs have added to their elusiveness. In Kallmyer’s reading of the limbs as a comment upon the practice of dissection, she states “the severed limbs look healthy and fleshy, and indisputably life-like.”207 They have retained their soft muscles, particularly noticeable in the flexed biceps and healthy yet withered arm, especially in comparison to Géricault’s drawing Dying and Emaciated Old Man—a figure whose skin hangs off of his thin limbs (Figure 2.23). The feet and hand are also voluptuous and lack the rigidity and weakness associated with death. There are small patches of rose and peach colored supple skin, particularly on the elbow, bottom of the left foot, and the knee in the background. However, these life-like colors are far overpowered by the glowing tones of death seen in the slightly livid coloring of green and yellow tints that could be indicative of the early stage of decomposition.

The limbs seem somewhat disturbing for reasons unrelated to their colors or even for the fact that they are severed limbs. Grigsby has argued it is their lack of sensuous

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ability to feel or touch that makes them so disturbing.\textsuperscript{208} We assume that as appendages they can sense touch and are therefore, alive, yet these limbs are separated from the nervous system that gives them the ability to feel. On the contrary, some dead limbs did have the ability to move (or be moved) in certain circumstances. To a degree, Géricault’s amputated legs and arm recall those galvanic tests that achieved the animation of various parts of the body. In his painting, the hand about to tickle the toes seemingly re-enacts an experiment conducted on the hand of a famous murderer in Scotland, Matthew Clydesdale, who was hanged and underwent galvanic tests on November 4, 1818. An observer to the event noted how “the fingers moved nimbly, like those of a violin performer: an assistant, who tried to close the fist, found the hand to open forcibly, in spite of his efforts.”\textsuperscript{209} It is quite possible that the limbs in the painting—particularly the contracted arm with bent elbow and flexed fingers—have undergone such an experiment and are now positioned akin to the display of disposed body parts after galvanic tests.

Despite the condition of these limbs as severed and most likely dissected objects, Géricault has portrayed them with incompatible physical characteristics that indicate life and death. Yet their embrace conjures a comforting life-like emotion, as does the hand about to tickle the toes, even as the skin bears the colors of both the living and a corpse. In subtle ways, Géricault has presented some qualities of \textit{la mort apparente} and misled the viewer to assume the limbs are dead. But set within the context of dissection theatres, galvanic experiments, and the contemporary story of Dr. Frankenstein revitalizing fragments of a corpse into a whole body, the painting alludes to the possibility that these

\textsuperscript{208} Grigsby, 206-207.

\textsuperscript{209} “Galvanic Experiments Conducted on the Dead body of a Criminal,” quoted in \textit{Galvanic Reanimation of the Dead: The exploits of nineteenth century scientists with electrical batteries and corpses.}\n
www.lateralscience.co.uk/reanim/galvreanim2.html
limbs may still sense life. I believe in light of this context, Géricault has portrayed limbs as neither alive nor dead but instead as enduring the ambiguous moments between life and death.

This concept is similarly represented in the two other paintings of the limbs seen from two different angles. *Anatomical Fragments* (collection of Robert Lebel, Paris) (Figure 2.22), is extremely similar to the former and often discussed as by Géricault, although its authenticity is not universally accepted. In this example, the limbs are viewed about a one-quarter clockwise turn from the perspective in the Montpellier painting. Instead of the hovering point of view seen in the latter image, these limbs are shown at eye-level with the leg and arm, making a strong horizontal emphasis to this quasi-portrait and still-life painting. They seem to float in an ambiguous space in a dark room with no sense of a dissection table or supporting element. The leg and arm are positioned side by side but they point in opposite directions as the elbow bends around the lower part of the leg, close to the ankle, and the hand gently rests beneath the foot to evoke a warm yet eerie embrace. A second foot crawls from under the hand to expose the underside of its ball and toes. The right side of the composition is heavily dominated by feet, a hand, a shoulder, and the white linen stained with red and light brown colors, wrapped around the upper arm. Only the leg, culminating at the knee, occupies the mostly empty left side. Although they are severed limbs, their skin lacks the livid and green tints of putrefaction and is colored with tans, whites, and peachy tints indicative of life. However one is subtly reminded of these limbs’ amputation in the gash on the top of

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210 Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971; reprint, 1990), 60. Nochlin argues that the horizontal placement of bodies in early nineteenth-century French paintings prefigures the death images from the mid-nineteenth century. She contends that the emphasis on horizontal compositions versus the verticality of Neoclassicism, for example, alludes to the here and now, the earth, and the actuality of dying which I see as evident in Géricault’s paintings of limbs with a strong sense of horizontality.
the shoulder and a darkened, slightly red-brown blur above the knee. As in all three paintings of limbs, the gruesomeness is limited yet obvious. Like the limbs depicted in the Montpellier painting, the limbs’ compassionate embrace and healthy skin in this painting imply life even as the bloody cloth wrapped around the arm and the blurred cuts and gashes suggest death. The extent to which the artist (possibly Géricault) painted these limbs as alive and dead—or as neither alive nor dead—suggests that they are more appropriately depicted in the uncertain moments of a status viatoris.

The final painting of Anatomical Fragments (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, owned by Musée du Louvre) (Figure 2.21), loosely attributed to Géricault, is the most peculiar and different of all three images. The limbs, viewed from another ninety-degree clockwise turn from the perspective in the Lebel painting, are seen from above and more close-up than the other two paintings making it the least recognizable as arms and legs. Poor execution of foreshortening on the leg and lower arm has deformed their shape and moves them toward abstraction. The color of the skin recalls the same pale and livid green and yellow tones highlighted with white and bloody reds as seen in the limbs from Montpellier and the saturation of the coloring is much less articulated and finessed. The sketch-like brushstrokes are bold, flat, and impressionistic in execution, particularly on the white cloth, yet the short, wispy strokes on the skin are reminiscent of those seen in Géricault’s Stockholm and Chicago paintings. In its less finished appearance this image lacks the texture he achieved in Severed Heads and Anatomical Fragments (Montpellier).

In the limbs from Rouen, the unknown artist or Géricault has emphasized the site of the wounds, to a greater extent than in the other two paintings. Both legs are positioned in such a way to expose the severed area located just above the knee. Blood
red colors and faint but gory details of the interior of a leg, such as bone and tendons, remind one of the gruesome, but scientific and sometimes necessary practice of amputating limbs and dissections. In a brief analysis of Géricault’s heads and limbs in a lecture given on the fragment, Linda Nochlin observed how their horizontal placement has rendered them “desublimatory” and in “the realm of the object [...] as lifeless, gruesome fragments, deployed on a tabletop like meat on a butcher’s counter.” Instead of human limbs, they have become pieces of meat, which was also noted by Knoch, who referred to them as flesh and meat. Unlike in the other two paintings, this artist has completely avoided any attempt to humanize the limbs by way of an embrace or tickling gesture which would have, at least, rendered them somewhat life-like. Like the head in the Chicago painting that possesses some characteristics of la mort apparente and an obvious bloody gash, the focus in the Rouen painting is also on the wounds or cuts and, therefore suggests that these limbs are also closer to death than to life but still somewhere between these two states.

The severed areas and Derrida’s idea of the “pure cut”

In all of these fragments, the heads and limbs are portrayed with the incompatible qualities of the living and the dead. As they defy any one particular state of existence, I argue they are more likely shown existing in the transition from life to death. Even more, their representation as severed bodily fragments highlights their incomplete state: their portrayal as detached or cut off can be seen as analogous to the period after life but before death. But the true nature of their fragmentary state and uncertain existence as neither alive nor dead is revealed at the place where the severance occurred. The wound

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212 Knoch, 155. “Géricault peut établir l’équation <chair = viande>, mais aussi comment il peut morceler d’une radicale le corps humain comme du bétail de boucherie.”
becomes the site where the *status viatoris* operates—a borderline. But in order to completely understand the meaning of this liminal zone, further explanation is needed to clarify its role as a place of passage.

Death was previously defined as “the absolute borderline” by Pieper in his discussion of the *status viatoris* in which he specified it as a metaphysical location requiring a crossing.\(^{213}\) Theologically this is best exemplified by the bizarre rituals performed by Christians at the deathbed of a loved one to assure the safe and successful passage of the soul after it has left the body and while en route to the afterlife. The perception of death as a boundary or something to cross over renders it an obstacle or impediment that could obstruct man’s destiny. Somewhat similar is Derrida’s view of death as an aporetic structure, an impasse that obstructs any passage. He, too, sees death as “the crossing of a border, a voyage between the here and the beyond [...] toward this or that place beyond the grave.” But as an aporia, this “voyage” toward death “involves a certain *pas* [step, not]” which at once illustrates its simultaneous potential to be traversed or hindered.\(^{214}\) If one believes that the act of death involves a *pas* or step, then thinking of death as a line or border becomes clear: it requires stepping over or through to achieve an end result. It is possible, then, for the borderline of death—a threshold—to appear as a physical line. A line that requires crossing, stepping, or that distinguishes one thing or place from another in relation to death could be interpreted in several ways, such as the river Styx that carries a person from the land of the living to Hell; the metaphorical line in Christianity that separates Heaven and Earth; or a more scientific and modern example of an electrocardiograph machine whose static flat line announces when a person’s heart

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\(^{213}\) Pieper, 19.  
has stopped beating, thus indicating one has transitioned from life to death. However, a line created by a cut made across the surface of a body during a dissection or autopsy or the sliced line across a neck that was produced by the blade of a guillotine during an execution is more relevant to my discussion of bodies and anatomical parts. Let me clarify that the incision or cut is not an act of death but it could be understood as the residual mark that verifies and indicates a death.

In Géricault’s paintings of heads and limbs, the cut or severed area can be seen as a borderline of sorts. One could think of this line as a sign of *hora mortis*—“the moment of transition between life and death”—that marks the site of *différence*.

Derrida’s word *différence* has a dual meaning and ideally suits this description of a line produced by severing. *Différence* stems from Derrida’s play on the French verb *différer* which simultaneously draws two implications. *Différer* means to distinguish between two entities that are not alike. In this discussion an example would be the two opposing states of life and death. But *différer* also refers to a delay or deferring, as in time or space, such as a lingering moment or the “temporalizing” progression from one place to another that is inherent to the idea of a *status viatoris*. Like the dual meanings of *différence*, the cuts or severed areas in Géricault’s paintings also have many connotations.

I would like to employ Derrida’s idea of the “pure cut” for a more intricate interpretation of the meaning inherent in Géricault’s portrayal of severed heads and limbs and particularly as a way to open up our understanding of the *status viatoris*. The relationship between death and *The Truth in Painting* is perfectly exemplified in these

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215 Arasse, 39.
217 Ibid., 130.
paintings, yet surprisingly Géricault’s portrayals of anatomical fragments have not been analyzed using Derrida’s idea. I begin with a brief explanation of Derrida’s *Parergon*, specifically the third chapter entitled *The ‘Sans’ of the Pure Cut*, from which I will focus on Derrida’s reading of Immanuel Kant’s idea of an aesthetic judgment of the beautiful (judgment of taste), a possible definition of the beautiful, and Kant’s use of the wild tulip as an example of the beautiful. I will then explore how Derrida’s interpretation of Kant may offer a new understanding of Géricault’s heads and limbs not only as objects that provoke aesthetic contemplation and thus, are judged as beautiful, but also as laden with a deeper meaning by absences or by what is not shown.\(^{218}\)

Derrida’s *Parergon* is a compilation of four essays—fragments of lectures—combined into an analysis of and rumination on Kant’s ideas on aesthetic contemplation and judgments of the beautiful from his *Critique of Judgment* (1790). His purpose is to destabilize or deconstruct Kant’s notion of the subject as the privileged center of aesthetic judgment. Through a web of observations and deductions Derrida interprets the structure and ordering of Kant’s requirements for an aesthetic judgment which, according to Derrida, become undone by the parergon that he defines as the limit between the interior and exterior of a work (such as a frame). To support his argument Derrida uses the third *Critique*, comprised of four movements (*quantity, quality, modality, relativity*) that create a kind of frame, as an object of contemplation for an aesthetic judgment of the beautiful. Using Kant’s definition of the beautiful and the requirements for a judgment of taste, Derrida seeks to find the ways in which this frame becomes undone by itself, particularly at the boundary between the inside and the outside.

I begin with a review of the central ideas in Kant’s *Critique* that are relevant to Derrida’s discussion. According to Kant, a judgment of taste is reflective and the feeling of the beautiful originates in the mind of the subject (rather than the object). He defined beauty as “an object’s form of *purposiveness* insofar it is perceived in the object *without the presentation of a purpose*.”

“Purposiveness-without-purpose” or “finality-without-end,” depending on the translation, means the concept or purpose (end) of an object is not known, which allows for a universal feeling of pleasure since the subject remains disinterested in the object. It is the disinterestness—a freedom of desire—that leads to a free play of the imagination in the subject so that beauty is not associated with any “end” or concept; such a perception then gives rise to an aesthetic judgment and feeling of the beautiful. In the second chapter Derrida argues that disinterestness or feelings of pleasure and displeasure is related to a “*detachment*—separation of a member,” although he admits this word does not appear “as such” in the *Critique*. But this *detachment* is, more or less, a preface to Derrida’s reading of a cut or severing of the concept or end of an object that is required, according to Kant, for an aesthetic judgment. Here, he merely introduces the observation that *detachment* is vital to the “disinterested attitude as essence of aesthetic experience.”

In the third chapter *The ‘Sans’ of the Pure Cut*, Derrida pursues Kant’s example of a wild tulip as an object of the beautiful to exemplify his argument that the source of beauty does not entirely originate in the subject but, more significantly, rests in the “sans of the pure cut” of the tulip. Derrida uses an illustration of a single tulip whose stem has

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221 Ibid., 39.
been cut on a bias to support his case. It is worth mentioning that this perfectly cut stem has fortuitously provided an ideal edge to suggest a pure cut which would never have occurred in a manually plucked tulip. Derrida notes how Kant’s discussion of a wild tulip was actually a parergon to the Critique. It was cut off from the main text, found in a footnote to the third movement (relation), of the analytic of the beautiful. In Kant’s objection to a rule, he explains “a flower, on the other hand, e.g., a tulip, is considered beautiful because in our perception of it, we encounter a certain purposiveness that, given how we are judging the flower, we do not refer to any purpose whatsoever.”

Derrida interprets this to mean “everything about the tulip, about its form, seems to be organized with a view to an end […] and yet there is something missing from this aiming at a goal [but]—the end [bout].” It is this experience—the lacking of an “end”—that gives rise to the feeling of the beautiful. Derrida calls attention to the “being cut off from the goal,” that is out of use, cut off from fecundation, because it creates an “absolute interruption” and it alone is capable of provoking an aesthetic judgment. He clarifies Kant’s interpretation of this cut as pure because it is “made with a single stroke” and, declares, “if this cut were not pure, if it could (at least virtually) be prolonged, completed, supplemented, there would be no beauty.” Derrida interprets Kant’s “without-end” in such a way that definitively severs or separates the “finality” (“purposiveness”) from the “end” (“purpose”) beyond it being caused by a simple disinterestness. For Derrida disinterestness means detachment (a separation) which appears “as interruption—as edging.”

Thus, he deduces “it is the without that counts for beauty, […] the edging in

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222 Kant, Critique of Judgment, 84.
223 Derrida, “Parergon,” in The Truth in Painting, 85-86.
224 Ibid., 87.
225 Ibid., 88.
sans of the pure cut.”  He takes his meditation on the edging a little further and suggests that the “without” is not a lack or lacking in anything; it is recognized by “the trace of its absence (of nothing), inasmuch as it forms its trait in the totality in the guise of the sans. […] the trace of the sans is the origin of beauty.”  Derrida has thus reduced the “without-end” to a trace of an absence where, according to him, an aesthetic judgment is free to take place.

I argue the severed areas and subsequent lines produced on the necks and limbs in Géricault’s Stockholm and Montpellier paintings equally illustrate Derrida’s reading of Kant’s example of a tulip where the “without” implies the possibility of an aesthetic judgment, not a disinterestedness or a “pure cut.” Like the tulip separated from its roots, the heads and limbs have been severed from their bodies and are no longer in use. Although bodiless, their form reflects their “finality” or “purposiveness” such that we understand their concept as being part of a human body—the limbs imply the whole body. If we take the “end” or “purpose” of a body to be livingness, the cut across the limb or across the neck becomes analogous to the cut in Kant’s tulip, albeit not a pure cut. Derrida suggests it is in the interruption, at the edging of the cut where the “without” and the trace of the “without” is absent which triggers the feeling of the beautiful in the subject. Thus, in the Stockholm painting of two severed heads, the sans appears by way of a trace of the sans, which Géricault has depicted as a bloodied dark and oblong hole at the base of the necks where the flesh-colored skin markedly contrasts with the sharp outline of the wound. A slight variation of this kind of noticeable edge is seen in

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226 Ibid., 89.
227 Ibid., 90.
228 The curvature of the severed area on the neck is curiously similar to the curved line of the cut on the stem of Derrida’s tulip.
Anatomical Fragments (Montpellier) where a cut is formed by an oval-shaped vertical slice across the shoulder parallel with the centrally-placed hand and foot. In both examples, the cuts across heads and limbs area can be interpreted as the trace of the sans which announces that the “end” or purpose is missing. Like Derrida many years later, in a sense, Géricault’s paintings which are about death (and life) and the lack of a pure cut that still allows for aesthetic judgments to take place have made a farce of Kant’s argument and example. Interestingly, in 1857, Delacroix famously commented that Géricault’s painting of limbs from Montpellier were “the best possible argument in favour (sic) of the Beautiful, as it should be understood.”\(^\text{229}\) We can only speculate what led Delacroix to make this kind of judgment of the beautiful about a painting that is dominated by severed body parts or we can merely amuse ourselves to think it may have had something to do with the “pure cut.”

Derrida further clarifies or specifies the role and meaning of the “pure cut” on judgments of beauty in a digression on Kant’s example of a tool without a hole. He remarks that “death always has an essential relation to this cut, the hiatus of this abyss where beauty takes us by surprise.”\(^\text{230}\) According to this reading then, he explains that death, like the cut “gives rise to the beautiful only in the interruption where it lets the sans appear.”\(^\text{231}\)

Could I say “let the moment of death appear”? The last phrase, “lets the sans appear,” at once, takes on a connotation pertinent to Géricault’s paintings. But this is completely rooted in Derrida’s sportive play on words, particularly his choice of sans.

\(^{229}\) Delacroix, Journal, March 5, 1857, 383. Unfortunately these paintings of heads and limbs were kept privately and never exhibited during Géricault’s lifetime; therefore, according to my research, contemporary comments and observations are limited to Delacroix’s statement and descriptions from Clément’s biography and catalogue raisonné.

\(^{230}\) Kant, Critique of Judgment, 84; Derrida, “Parergon,” in The Truth in Painting, 89.

\(^{231}\) Derrida, “Parergon,” in The Truth in Painting, 89.
He plays with the homophonic qualities of the French word *sans* which when spoken sounds similar to *sang* (blood) and *sens* (meaning). The *sang* of the pure cut and the *sens* of the pure cut are ideally suited to this discussion of the severed heads and limbs, as each address the bloodied area produced as a result of a cut. The “*sang* of the pure cut,” literally and straightforwardly, describes Géricault’s representation of a bloody severance caused by a knife or the guillotine’s blade. On the other hand, for my purposes I favor the more critical interpretation of the “*sens* of the pure cut” wherein *sens* equals meaning. At the “*sens* of the pure cut” meaning is revealed such that it relates to death as it exists in the hiatus of the abyss. If death occurs at the *sans*, then so does life. Here the transaction between life and death operates but more importantly, this uncertain progression visually appears in the form of a cut that is defined because of the *sans*. Derrida’s reading of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, specifically Kant’s example of a tulip, informed this new reading of Géricault’s paintings of severed heads and limbs in such a way to broaden our understanding of the portrayal of the passage from life to death.

**Conclusion**

The paintings discussed in this chapter can be seen as comments upon contemporary issues such as capital punishment, the practice of dissection, treatment of Napoleonic soldiers and society by the Bourbon monarchy, or a horrific event caused by government-appointed officials that resulted in the death of over a hundred people. I, however, in acknowledgment of these other valid interpretations, have chosen to specifically focus on Géricault’s portrayals of bodies and situate their appearance with regard to contemporary medical research and the political, social, and cultural issues relevant to the Restoration period.
Within the larger visual context of the Restoration, Géricault’s paintings of heads and limbs and the *Raft of the ‘Medusa’* distinctly recall presentations of bodies and body parts in public executions at the guillotine and the display of corpses at the morgue. Curious spectators at the scaffold were rewarded with seeing real pieces of bodies that allegedly sensed life after decapitation and morgue visitors seemingly found pleasure in viewing corpses exhibited upright on stone slabs in a mockingly life-like manner. But their presentation as ambiguously alive and dead, or somewhere in between, was transitory and thus, ephemeral. These spectacles were temporary and eventually the fragments at the guillotine or the bodies at the morgue would decompose and the presence of *la mort réelle* would be undeniable. The temporal existence and ambiguousness of the bodies in these states was verified by the wealth of medico-scientific research into the mysterious physiologic period between life and death. This uncertainty of dying that was also reflective of similar feelings associated with the *mal du siècle* created a new construction of death that privileged this ambiguity. I have suggested in this chapter that Géricault’s depiction of the foreground figures in the *Raft of the ‘Medusa’* and the heads and limbs as ambiguously alive or dead or somewhere between life and death illustrate this construction. The bodies and fragments are portrayed in an interminable *status viatoris*, caught in the uncertain moments that separate life from death, yet are fixed in the permanent medium of a painting forever obliged to be commodified and consumed by the viewer. As a result, these images have produced a perpetual spectacle of death that opens onto a constant sense of ambiguity.
Epilogue

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’ *Death of Leonardo da Vinci* (1818, Musée du Petit Palais, Paris), Paul Delaroche’s, *Death of Elizabeth, Queen of England, in 1603* (1828, Musée du Louvre, Paris), and Léon Cogniet’s *Tintoretto Painting his Dead Daughter* (1843, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux) epitomized the historic deathbed scenes popular during the first half of the nineteenth century. These paintings typically depicted a person of some renown in the throes of death. Ary Scheffer contributed to this trend in 1824 with a small painting *Géricault on His Death Bed* (Figure 2.24). In many ways, Scheffer portrays an even more ambiguous representation of death than ordinarily found in other examples of this genre. I argue that his painting, often seen as a memorial to his friend, more specifically reflects Géricault’s aesthetic approach to portraying the idea of death.

In 1822 Géricault suffered from what was then diagnosed as a tumor on his spine as a result of a riding accident. This led to a prolonged confinement in bed, followed by eventually his death on January 26, 1824 at the age of 34. Scheffer visited the artist during his illness, and painted *Géricault on His Deathbed* from memory.232 The somewhat congested composition is dominated by Géricault who lies on a bed placed parallel with the picture plane, while a man sits to the right of the artist and another man stands in a narrow space behind the bed. A long cream-colored curtain, presumably suspended from the ceiling, drapes downward toward right of the composition and frames the area above the foot of the bed. On the back wall of the room, Scheffer added numerous examples of Géricault’s paintings that seem to be displayed as a sort of

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memorial to his work. Scheffer’s palette, limited to monochromatic tones of brown and
tan, black, white, and a few touches of rich red sienna, creates a somber and quiet
atmosphere in the room.

The figures, however, provoke an even greater sense of mourning and solemnity.
Géricault appears livid, thin, and pale in a sleep-like state with his eyes and mouth closed.
His visage is visually reminiscent of Delacroix’s observation of him recorded after a visit
in late December 1823: “he is dying; his emaciation is dreadful to see—thighs no thicker
than my arms and a head like that of an ancient, dying man. [...] And now, he cannot even
turn in his bed without assistance!”233 Scheffer has depicted this pathetic description of
Géricault as well as two of his most frequent visitors. Colonel Louis Bro, Géricault’s
neighbor and a Napoleonic veteran, holds the artist’s left hand and leans over him while
his downturned eyes presumably stare at the dying or dead man’s face. Dedroux-Dorcy,
a close childhood friend and fellow painter, sits on the opposite side of the bed, props his
arms and head on the back of a chair and turns away while holding his sick friend’s right
hand. They each display feelings of concern and remorse; respectively, Bro conveys
concern for Géricault’s comfort during the last moments of his life while Dedroux-Dorcy’s
pose implies the tears of remorse and sadness over someone who has already
died. The positions of all three men connected via gesture could be interpreted as
Géricault’s transition from life (expressed by Bro’s concern) to death (Dedroux-Dorcy’s
remorse).

However, Géricault’s physical characteristics also attest to his ambiguous or
transitional state of existence. Most notably his livid, pale-greenish skin is in sharp

contrast with the hands of his friends. His distinctive coloring may suggest the onset of putrefaction which was considered by many doctors and scientists as the only true sign of real death. Yet Géricault’s skin tone could also be symptomatic of a sickness or asphyxia, both of which yield signs of apparent death. His pale and deathly coloring may have been a painterly effect used by Scheffer to emphasize his friend’s ill health and imminent death, which would insinuate that the artist may actually still be alive.

Differences in skin color, however, were considered a traditional artistic means to distinguish the deceased from the living. Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, Scheffer and Géricault’s teacher, had used this technique on two occasions. This may have had some impact on Scheffer who was undoubtedly aware of Guérin’s ability to highlight the state of death through contrasting skin tones. In 1793, Guérin’s The Death of Brutus failed to win the Grand prix because his Brutus was considered by members of the jury as “being dead for too long a time” and lacked the idealized heroic dead body typical of the neoclassical style (Figure 2.25). In the center of the composition Brutus’ body hangs limp in the arms of fellow soldiers, much like Christ’s pose seen in several Lamentation scenes. His livid and greenish skin emphasizes his lifeless body, more than his pose, as well as accentuating his ethereal, yet deathly glow in contrast to the other figures. Guérin’s portrayal of Brutus in this naturalistic state of death directly opposes the idealism of the nude male body promoted by Winckelmann and popularized during this era. Beyond paintings that could serve as models, however, there was also the

\[234\] Athanase Détournelle, “Réflexions sur le jugement de peinture,” Journal de la société républicaine des arts, quoted in Philippe Bords, La Mort de Brutus de Pierre-Narcisse Guérin (Vizille: Musée de la Révolution Française, 1996), 141. “Tous les membres du jury ont été d’accord à trouver le corps de Brutus représenté mort depuis trop longtemps.”

immediate example of the bodies of victims of Revolutionary violence. Inspired by this reality, Guérin felt compelled to visually heighten the deathly veracity of Brutus’ sunburnt and livid skin.\footnote{De Baecque, 5.}

Guérin repeated this naturalistic death-like skin tone in The Return of Marcus Sextus in 1799 which more closely corresponds to Scheffer’s painting (Figure 2.26). Guérin narrowed his focus to the morbid physical characteristics of Marcus Sextus and his dead wife’s intersecting hands. In the center of the composition, Sextus sits on the edge of his wife’s bed while his distraught daughter kneels at his feet. His wife lies horizontally behind him with her head flung over the bed. Her lifeless body is suggested by her prostrate, languid pose that allows the sheets to fall carelessly and seductively off her chest and expose her breast. Her left limp arm is suspended by Sextus’ right hand which holds her wrist, while the fingers of his left hand interlock with her lifeless fingers. This intersection occurs directly below the center of the composition which naturally draws the observer’s eye to the focal point. Sextus’ large, strong, and brown-toned animate hands distinctively contrast with her pale white and livid fingers as if Guérin purposely emphasized them to accentuate the couples’ opposite states of life and death, as well as to better convey their pathetic story. I argue Scheffer similarly used this technique of lifeless versus living hands to draw attention to the differences between Géricault and his two friends.

Another obvious influence on Scheffer’s painting comes from the compositional arrangement of Louis Hersent’s Death of Xavier Bichat from 1817, a deathbed portrait of the famous anatomist and physiologist who died in 1802 (Figure 2.27). Hersent depicts Bichat lying on a bed, placed parallel to the picture plane, in a darkened room and is
visited by two comforting friends. *Death of Xavier Bichat* was shown at the Salon as was Scheffer’s *Death of Saint-Louis* (1817, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles), so we can assume that Scheffer was familiar with Hersent’s way of representing Bichat in this composition. In the paintings, the interior spaces are similar, but the view into Bichat’s interior incorporates a wider angle and the table on the left is fully shown. Each painting includes a figure that stands behind the bed and one who sits in front of it, as well as showing paintings hung on the rear wall. Their palettes are likewise similarly comprised of browns, creams, and sienna colors.

There is a deeper connection between these two works. To grasp it, however, we must consider the historical figure of Bichat and the work he did as a physician on the physiological aspects of dying. In his scholarship, Bichat proved, by direct observation of the interiors of bodies via dissections and vivisections, the ways in which disease affects tissues and organs which cause them to progressively cease functioning, thus confirming the belief that temporal moments separate life from death. I suggest this is reflective of the ideas of a *status viatoris*. Scheffer has portrayed Géricault in a *status viatoris* that closely conforms to Bichat’s ideas, as he appears neither strictly alive nor dead but somewhere in between. My reasoning is based upon the placement of the men and Géricault, the latter positioned as a transitional person between his friend, who views him as alive, and the other who considers him already dead. His ambiguous death-toned coloring and motionless body also supports the possibility of being either alive or dead, particularly in consideration of the characteristics of *la mort apparente* of which Bichat proposed many examples. It is additionally possible that in his painting Scheffer could have been paying homage to Bichat, on behalf of Géricault, with regard to the artist’s
practice of painting and valuing the knowledge of severed and dissected bodies that Bichat found to be indispensible to the medical community. I propose that Scheffer’s depiction of Géricault in a way so closely related to the findings of the French physiologist as well as like Bichat’s deathbed portrait is not coincidence. It seems Scheffer found a way to expose the profound connection between Géricault and Bichat rooted in a representation of the ambiguous moments that separate life from death.

The question of whether Scheffer intended to portray Géricault as dead or dying remains unanswered. My argument that he painted the artist to reflect a status viatoris is, however, well-founded on account of Géricault’s propensity in his own work to paint contrasting features of living and dead bodies, as well as bodies that appear to pass from one stage of existence to another. It seems appropriate, then, at the end of Géricault’s life that he would be depicted and memorialized in a similar manner.
Chapter 3

“O! The smile of a dying man!”: The Period Between Life and Death in Eugène Delacroix’s Paintings of Heroic Death

Following Géricault’s portrayal of figures with ambiguous characteristics associated with both the living and the dead in the Raft of the ‘Medusa,’ Delacroix, too, produced several paintings that resulted in the representation of figures within a status viatoris. This chapter will explore these contradictory aspects in Delacroix’s scenes of heroic death: Dante and Virgil in Hell, Massacres at Chios, Death of Sardanapalus, Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi, and Liberty Leading the People. Through close readings of these paintings I will suggest how Delacroix progressed from an emphasis on the depiction of a status viatoris in the composition as a whole, to its presence in the physiological appearance of figures, the use of fragments of bodies, the figures’ use of gestures and actions, and finally, to a combination of all these elements. This focus on the play of life versus death will illuminate Delacroix’s major paintings from the Restoration, especially insofar as the works reflect aspects of the mal du siècle and the influence of contemporary medical ideas on dying and death.

Biography, influence of Napoleonic hero, and development of heroic death

Delacroix was born in 1798 (d. 1863) to a wealthy and successful family during the perilous transition from the Revolution to the Empire. His father, Charles, held several positions in the government including Foreign Press secretary and was Prefect of the Gironde when he died in 1805. In fact, all of the men in Delacroix’s family and their close friend Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, his suspected biological father, played a role

in the Empire.\footnote{Rumors circulated throughout the nineteenth century that Delacroix may have been the son of Talleyrand, a close friend of the family and fellow employee of the Directory and Empire although neither the artist nor anyone in his family ever discussed this possibility or sought to prove this suspicion. Charles had a twenty-eight pound tumor removed from his testicle six months prior to Eugène’s birth. The surgery was documented and published by the doctor in \emph{Le Moniteur universel} (April 13, 1798) and later in a medical report. Historians suspected this tumor would have made it impossible for Charles to be the boy’s father. A slight physical resemblance and similarity of demeanor have also been suggested as evidence for a biological relationship between Talleyrand and Eugène. Although historians often include this story as part of Delacroix’s biography, it is now considered as a rumor but still worthy of mention. See Ange-Bernard Imbert-Delonnès, \textit{Opération de sarcocèle faite, le 27 fructidor an V, au citoyen Charles Delacroix par le citoyen A.-B. Imbert-Delonnès} (Paris: Imprimerie de la République, 1798), cited by Fraser in, \textit{Delacroix, Art, and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13-16.} Charles, his brother, was a colonel and aide-de-camp in the army and, like many other officers, suffered as a \textit{demi-solde} during the Restoration. Another brother, Henry, died in battle while also serving in the Imperial army. Their participation in the military under the Empire undoubtedly helped shape Delacroix’s idea of nationalism, the meaning of what it meant to be a hero, and that of heroic death.\footnote{Delacroix often referred to his brother Charles as a hero. In 1825 his brother Charles saved two drowning men and upon hearing the news, Delacroix described his brother’s effort as a “self-sacrificing deed” and expressed to him that he “was proud as though I had been the hero myself.” (Delacroix to Charles Delacroix, 21 April 1826, \textit{Selected Letters}, 134.) To an extent Delacroix insinuated that he could vicariously experience the feeling of being a hero through his brother’s achievement. After Charles’ death in 1846, Delacroix referred to him as “my brother, my hero” and later as “my heroic brother” in a letter to George Sands. (Delacroix to Sand, 25 January 1846, \textit{Selected Letters}, 267-268.) Charles’ role in Napoleon’s army and appearance as the ideal Napoleonic hero had certainly impressed his younger brother and inspired the artist’s perception of the Imperial soldier as a hero. Roy Howard Brown suggests Delacroix’s respect and admiration for his brother as a hero is evident in the way in which he portrayed Charles in \textit{Portrait of Charles Delacroix} (1822). His sitting pose with his head leaning onto his hand for support was used for one of Delacroix’s other known heroes in \textit{Tasso in the Hospital of St. Anna, Ferrara} (1824, Zurich, private collection). See Brown, “The Formation of Delacroix’s Hero Between 1822 and 1831,” \textit{Art Bulletin} 66, no. 2 (June 1984): 240-241.} However, after the fall of Napoleon, Delacroix, like many other youths of the generation of 1820, was displaced from his familiar status in society and began to experience the disillusionment with the Bourbon government, a loss of hope, and a weariness with life associated with the \textit{mal du siècle}. In a letter to Raymond de Soulier from 1821, quoted in Chapter One but worth reciting here, Delacroix poetically described his malaise:

Try as one will, one always sees within oneself a gulf, an abyss which is never filled. One is always longing for something that never comes. There’s always a sense of
emptiness, never an abundance, a full draught of happiness.\textsuperscript{239}

During his early career Delacroix’s malady manifested itself in his satirical drawings and prints from 1814 to 1822, often disregarded as minor works, that indicate his disappointment in the new monarchy, as well as the displacement of his Bonapartist ideals and sadness over the loss of Frenchness in France, as Nina Kallmyer has shown.\textsuperscript{240}

At the beginning of the Restoration, certain censorship restrictions that had been put in place by Napoleon were loosened, and caricaturists were able to freely critique the government along with other subjects. Amongst Delacroix’s various subjects, for instance, the foreign occupation of France and the depletion or abuse of her resources after Napoleon’s defeat, were two such ideas. The etching, \textit{Troupes anglaises. Le bagage de campagne}, (1815, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et photographie, Paris) shows an English soldier, somewhat humpbacked, walking with his pregnant wife and two children as he carries their possessions on his back and on his bayonet through the countryside. Delacroix also tackled the topic of less-than-qualified army appointments, a subject close to him because of his brother Charles’ demotion from officer to \textit{demi-solde}, in \textit{Leçon de voltiges} (1822, lithograph, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et photographie; Paris).

The artist’s sorrow over Napoleon’s loss is witnessed in \textit{Buonaparte I} (etching, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et photographie, Paris,) a work from 1814 that suggests the more serious side of Napoleon’s defeat and exile. The title \textit{Buonaparte I} invokes Napoleon’s Corsican name which had been revived by Royalists who were trying to emphasize his status as an outsider. Kallmyer suggests Delacroix’s

\textsuperscript{239}Delacroix to Charles Soulier, 21 February 1821, \textit{Selected Letters}, 97.

depiction of Napoleon is larger in scale and separated by an empty space from an officer on horseback on the right and an ape-like figure on the left to imply his isolation and exile. His expression, likewise, suggests his sadness and defeat. It was inevitable Delacroix would bear a deep appreciation and affinity toward the Emperor considering his family was intimately connected to the Empire and must have made an indelible impression upon him as a young boy. Yet after Napoleon’s defeat, and thus his family’s as well, his former ideals of victory and patriotism no longer existed. The defeat of Napoleon and the return of the former monarchy ushered in a profound sense of homelessness, a lack of French identity, and above all, the loss of the ideal Napoleonic hero for many in society.

Delacroix’s opinion on this new post-Empire view may be gleaned from his discussion of possible subjects for paintings. By December 1823 Delacroix had read Comte de Las Cases’ *Mémorial de Ste Hélène*, a biography of Napoleon written during his final years on the island, and in a journal entry he noted, “I should like to do some subjects from the Revolution; *Bonaparte’s arrival with the army in Egypt* for instance, or the *Farewell at Fontainebleau.*” Delacroix had ironically suggested two very different and climactic events in Napoleon’s career—an early heroic success and a symbol of his defeat or the heroic death of his rule. The more iconic image of Napoleon who appeared as a hero in *Arrival in Egypt* could also become the tragic hero. Delacroix’s suggestion of the *Farewell at Fontainebleau* theme not only underlines Napoleon’s defeat but also introduces his death.

As Thomas Gaehtgens has argued, during the Restoration the meaning of hero in the traditional sense had been usurped by the more familiar and modern idea of the hero

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as defeated or even dead, much like the perception of Napoleon and his Empire.\footnote{Thomas W. Gaehtgens, “L’Artiste en tant que héros—Eugène Delacroix,” in Triomphe et mort du héros. La peinture d’histoire en Europe de Rubens à Monet: une exposition (Lyon: Electa/Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, 1988), 127-128.} And so the vision of a heroic death came to symbolize the generation of 1820’s lament over the loss or lack of a hero. In Gaehtgens’ article on Delacroix’s heroes, he argues it was “precisely the ruined heroes who fascinated” the artist; these figures were “rarely victorious heroes” but more “often tragic losers” who “suffered a tragic fate.”\footnote{Ibid., 120 and 121. Full quotations: “C’est justement le héros ‘raté’ qui le fascinait, car celui-ci, à cause de ses faiblesses, conservait toute son humanité. “[..] “Les héros de Delacroix sont rarement d’héroïques vainqueurs, ce sont souvent de tragiques vaincus.” “[..] “Les héros ne sont pas à eux seuls des ‘exempla virtutis.’ Ce ne sont pas non plus des modèles, places seulement là dans un but didactique pour sauvegarder la morale ou les vertus politiques de l’État; ce sont surtout des hommes, qui souffrent d’un destin tragique.”} This theme of the defeated hero, a vital element in Delacroix’s paintings, stemmed from the ubiquitous remorse felt by society over the defeat of Napoleon and the Empire and the loss of the Napoleonic hero; Delacroix repeatedly addressed this loss in his depiction of heroic deaths, as he emphasized figures existing in moments of uncertain fate.

\textit{Dante and Virgil in Hell}

For his first Salon, Delacroix had allegedly considered two subjects concerned with heroic death before settling on his final choice. Sometime during 1821, he abandoned the \textit{Death of Drusus}, a deathbed scene showing Drusus, son of Germanicus, who died from starvation while wrongfully imprisoned by the Emperor Tiberius. As the work featured a classical subject, he may have believed it to be a safe choice for the Salon.\footnote{Johnson, I: 71-72, and 74.} However, in September 1821 he decided on a different subject: a painting based on the life of Marcos Botzaris, a successful leader in the Greek revolt. He remarked in a letter, “I shall take [the subject] from the recent wars between the Turks and the Greeks. I think that under the circumstances, and provided the work is well done,
this would be a way to attract some attention." One wonders if in his statement "under the circumstances" he was referring to the current wave of nostalgia for Napoleon, who had just died in May of 1821. Comparisons between the former emperor and the youthful and successful military hero Botzaris are compelling and the Greek leader could remind the Salon audience of a victorious era experienced under Napoleon’s reign. Delacroix may have thought an image of a virtuous leader in battle would have a greater allure to an audience who mourned their beloved Napoleon than a classical heroic deathbed scene like Death of Drusus. However, despite this nostalgic possibility Delacroix never developed the Botzaris subject beyond a few sketches; instead he began a completely different interpretation of heroes facing death by January 1822 for the upcoming Salon in Dante and Virgil in Hell (Figure 3.1).246

In the Salon pamphlet, the full title of the painting read: Dante and Virgil conducted by Phlegyas, crossing the lake which surrounds the walls of the infernal city of Dis. The damned cling to the bark or try to force their way into it. Dante recognizes some Florentines among them. Delacroix shows Dante and Virgil in the center of the composition where they stand in a boat driven by Phlegyas (more popularly known by his Roman name as Charon), hunched over and with his back to the viewer; he steers the boat through rough waters. Surrounding the vessel are seven souls of the damned portrayed in the throes of violence—attacking the boat, fighting each other, and aggressively swarming in the water around the travelers. Their maddening gestures and expressions reflect their tormented state in Hell and create a marked contrast with the stoicism of Virgil and, to a certain degree, Dante. The demonic nature of Hell is reflected

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245 Delacroix to Soulier, 15 September 1821, Selected Letters, 105.
246 For a partial bibliography of the literature on this painting see Johnson, I: 72-73.
in the overall darkness of the scene and by the inflamed city of Dis which imbues the painting with a forbidding gloom and foreshadows the travelers’ approach toward death in the underworld.

As noted by Théophile Gautier and Maxime du Camp in the nineteenth century, *Dante and Virgil in Hell* illustrates a narrative. However, the painting is also a compilation of Delacroix’s artistic influences that would shape his art for the rest of the career. This is most simply seen in the angled boat, troubled waters, robust and muscular bodies, vivid water droplets, and intense colors that reflect qualities Delacroix borrowed from Michelangelo, Rubens, and Géricault. Critics and historians have further explored other ways in which Delacroix’s painting manifests artistic inspiration. Charles Baudelaire’s poetic interpretation of the painting in 1846 recognized Delacroix’s influences from Michelangelo and Rubens by his ability to convey emotions and meaning through expressions and pictorial forms. Similarly James Rubin argued the painting was a Romantic manifesto in which Delacroix used Michelangelo as his source of the modern ideal that would situate him within the contemporary world of theoretical discourse on romanticism versus classicism. More recently Elisabeth Fraser focused on the *Dante and Virgil in Hell* as a restaging of artistic paternal authority in which Michelangelo and Dante are the new fathers. Despite the many interpretations of this painting as an illustration of a text, a metaphor for human destiny, or an academic example of artistic influences, *Dante and Virgil in Hell* can also be read as a visual

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exploration of the body as it progresses from life to death or, more simply, the passage from life to death as exemplified by Dante and Virgil on the boat as it carries them to Hell.

In the midst of this journey Dante appears weak and fearful upon his confrontation with death and the dead. He looks down to one of the damned as if surprised, perhaps even frightened. His troubled pose with one arm up while leaning backward toward Virgil who gently reaches for his left hand, most likely is in reaction to his recognition of one of the tormented souls in the water; fellow Florentine, Filippo Argenti, who tells Dante that he too will share this fate after death. Delacroix emphasizes Dante’s vulnerable attitude as he stands before death and the dead, but still portrays him in a heroic manner. Although untraditional, Dante’s heroism is legitimate; heroism was described in the nineteenth century as “first and foremost a reflex of the terror of death.”

Moreover, Delacroix portrays Dante in accordance with Moya Longstaffe’s description of the hero as one who “confronts death, but need not necessarily die.” To the young Romantic artist, Dante’s heroism stems from his sincere and honest reaction of fear and surprise toward the unknown and frightening aspects of death. This perception of heroism witnessed in Dante can be seen as somewhat analogous to the contemporary experiences of the now defeated and hopeless Napoleonic veterans who had previously faced and survived death.

As a means to emphasize Dante’s heroic confrontation with death, Delacroix attempted to differentiate the living from the (supposedly) dead through the depiction of

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binary opposites. For instance, the living (Dante, Virgil, and Phlegyas) reside in the boat and remain precariously separated from the dead in the water who attempt to penetrate the vessel. Each group’s position helps distinguish its contrasting elements such as facial features, dress, and poses. For example, the glistening nude and writhing bodies of the damned in the water noticeably differ from the clothed and statuesque bodies of Dante, Virgil, and Phlegyas. The scowling expressions of five dead souls who face the viewer are, likewise, in contrast with the concerned but stoic demeanor seen on both Dante and Virgil. In simple ways, Delacroix created obvious contradictions between the living and the dead that were intended to reinforce Dante’s honest and fearful, yet heroic, confrontation with death and the dead.

But to a certain extent Delacroix blurred the differences between the living and the dead. Dante and Virgil should have appeared alive and seemingly do, considering their gestural movements and expressions. However, one critic, Adolphe Thiers, described Dante as “supposedly alive” and Virgil as having “the colors of death.” Delacroix may have painted Virgil slightly paler in comparison to Dante as a means to suggest his ancient origin. For the dead souls in Hell, Delacroix chose to represent them with colors traditionally associated with death, such as livid and greenish tints on the skin, that were meant to indicate decomposing or bloodless bodies wanting of life. The two prostrate torsos facing the viewer in the foreground appear strangely pale and glow with a brightness similar to the lividity of a corpse. Their brilliance partially stems from the droplets of water, composed of individually constructed dabs of white, yellow, green, and cadmium orange which were undoubtedly informed by Peter Paul Ruben’s nereids in

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the *Disembarkation of Marie d’ Medici at Marseilles* (1622-24, Musée du Louvre, Paris). This same green, sickly tint is also seen in the demon biting the boat on the left and the two figures fighting each other who may have inspired a critic, Adolphe de Loève-Veimars, to note how their livid coloring “leaves in the soul I do not know what calamitous impression.” The eerie coloring which produced this sort of response becomes further accentuated by the reddish-orange highlights on the eyes and mouths of several demons, especially the one hovering on the far side of the boat. John Bunnell Davis, a nineteenth-century medical theorist, cited the “defect of the brightness of eyes,” exemplified in these red-orange eyes, or changes to the pupil and iris as a fallible sign of death. He, furthermore, clarified how lividity was capable of deceiving an observer since “there are several persons, in perfect health, who are as pale as the dead” and continues to explain “there are moreover many cases of only apparent deaths, where the subjects have pallid faces. So, the color of the face, be it pale or pallid, doesn’t indicate a state of life any more than a state of death.” Delacroix’s use of a known traditional

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254 For a discussion on the comparison between Rubens’ and Delacroix’s water droplets, see Sébastien Allard, *Dante et Virgile aux Enfers ’ d’ Eugène Delacroix* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2004), 84-92. It is noteworthy that it was the bodies of the damned, with their prismatic dabs of color, who most appealed to later nineteenth-century artists. *Dante and Virgil in Hell* was copied by numerous artists including Gustave Courbet (c. 1840s), Eugène Manet (c. 1850s, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon; c. 1850s, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City), and Paul Cézanne (1860s, Collection of Lady Clark) which was unusual for a living artist. Their interest in Delacroix as a colorist may have been inspired by the hues seen on the ambiguously alive and dead bodies. Sara Lichtenstein has explored Delacroix’s influence on Cézanne; see “Cézanne and Delacroix,” *The Art Bulletin* 46 no. 1 (March 1964): 55-67; see also Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, “Cézanne and Delacroix’s Posthumous Reception,” *The Art Bulletin* 87 no. 1 (March 2005): 111-129. For a general discussion of Delacroix’s influence on later artists, see Fraser, 36-38; and Johnson, I: 76, and Johnson, *Delacroix* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1963), 18-19.


256 Davis, 92. “le défaut d’éclat des yeux”

257 Ibid., 105. “Il y a beaucoup des personnes, d’une santé parfaite, qui sont aussi pâles que des morts; Il y a certaines cadavres, dont le visage est rouge, vermeil, comme celui des personnes en santé. Il y a en outre bien des cas des morts seulement apparentes, où les sujets en la face livide. Ainsi, la couleur, soit pâle, soit livide, de la face n’indique pas plus un état de vie qu’un état de mort.”
quality of death for the supposed dead souls in the water must have seemed logical, yet because of recent medical research these accepted characteristics had become some of the most misleading signs of *la mort réelle*.

Conversely, the vigorous movement and healthy robust bodies of the damned suggest a liveliness that is antithetic to the idea of a corpse. It seems Delacroix could not refuse the opportunity to showcase his admiration of the idealized and exaggerated muscular bodies inspired by Michelangelo and Rubens, as well as the classical sculpture, the *Belvedere Torso*. Like the numerous figures seen in Michelangelo and Rubens’ work, Delacroix’s tense, fleshy, and articulated muscles of the damned deny any sense of death and instead exude more vivacity than the supposedly living Dante and Virgil. Consequently, Delacroix’s attempt to distinguish the living from the dead seems to have failed. His depiction of the damned with a vague and irresolute sense of death resulted in their appearance with physical qualities that belong to both the living and the dead.

Delacroix’s portrayal of these figures, ambiguously situated between life and death, casts a sense of confusion and doubt over the subject of the painting. This impression is underscored by the uncertainty exhibited by Dante’s expression and unstable stance as he leans toward Virgil. In Sébastien Allard’s detailed study of *Dante and Virgil in Hell*, he discusses the “general instability” caused by Dante’s awkward tilt and the unsteadiness of the agitated boat. Allard suggests that through this instability “the artist introduces in this way a sort of suspense, and brings about an effect of surprise.” This suspense is rooted in Delacroix’s emphasis on the precipitous moments and the imminent danger that materialize during Dante and Virgil’s progression to the

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258 Allard, 63. “l’instabilité générale.”
259 Ibid., “L’artiste introduit ainsi une sorte de suspens, ménageant un effet de surprise.”
underworld. Their transition across the lake that separates the world of the living from the dead is arguably similar to the temporality of *status viatoris* wherein passage occurs through the liminal unknown space between life and death. Thus, *Dante and Virgil in Hell* not only reflects this uncertain period compositionally but also in Dante and Virgil’s heroic and suspenseful confrontation with death and the ambiguously dead souls who exist between life and death; they are all situated in a borderland space.

*Massacres at Chios*

Delacroix’s next major Salon painting in 1824, *Massacres at Chios*, built upon the use of the composition to suggest an ambiguous temporal aspect and the misleading physical characteristics of the body from the *Dante and Virgil in Hell* (Figure 3.2). This strange vertically formatted half-landscape, half-history painting is comprised mostly of sky and land while the foreground is occupied by numerous figures. Greek men, women, and children are motionless and posed in small groupings in various sitting, lying, and standing positions. The exception occurs on the far right of the composition with the energetic struggle and action involving the Turkish man, his horse, a Greek girl, and a man who throws himself onto the horse. Behind this cast, the landscape is dotted with blurred indications of figures, buildings, and smoke blowing across the yellowish-tan and brown shaded ground. A distinctive horizon line separates the land from the sea and sky created with yellowish-white and tan clouds that are interrupted by patches of muted turquoise-blue tones. Shocked by its appearance when exhibited at the Salon, critics had strong reactions to the lack of central focus, the harsh use of colors, and the confusing
composition. They also noted how the figures appeared both confusingly alive and dead and seemed to do nothing but wait for death or slavery. The attention critics paid to the question of life and death is particularly significant for this study. In a sense, they too, discerned that Delacroix had portrayed an uncertain temporal period within the scene and, moreover, figures that exist in an indeterminate space between life and death.

It should be noted, however, that Massacres at Chios is not exclusively concerned with the visual display of the moments between life and death. The painting is undoubtedly a political remark on the subjugation and plight of Greek war victims when French officials were hesitant to become too involved in the situation. It also attests to Delacroix’s early interest in the Romantic fascination with Orientalism—the colors, the people, and the objects. This particular subject of the victims at Chios allowed him to pursue in painting his awareness of contemporary events and his love of Orientalism in such a way that combined history, portrait, and landscape genres.

The full title given in the Salon pamphlet, Scènes des massacres de Scio: familles grecques attendant la mort ou l’esclavage, etc. (Voir les relations diverses et les journaux du temps), does more than merely describe the image. It also emphasizes the ephemeral nature of the subject. This was achieved in two ways that are pertinent to this examination. Delacroix’s use of the word “scenes” indicates multiple episodes that would require viewers to experience a prolonged period of looking and, to a certain degree, allowed them to mimic the uncertain, temporal journey of the figures as they progress from life to death. The spectator is forced to briefly absorb the details of each

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260 For a brief summary of negative salon reviews, see Fraser, Delacroix, Art, and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France, 62-62 and 78; Grigsby, 246 and 275-276; and Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, French Images from the Greek War of Independence, 1821 – 1830 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 31.

261 The ephemeral nature of the title also stems from Delacroix’s instruction to reference sources from popular weekly literature.
“scene,” of which there are arguably five separate vignettes of people, before moving on to the next cluster. This act resulted in what can be interpreted as a transitory viewing experience of various segments instead of a simultaneous observation of an entire painting. Margaret MacNamidhe has referred to Delacroix’s exploration of “in-between states,”—figures in varying degrees of suffering, life, dying, and death—as integral to a compositional strategy that made Massacres at Chios even more difficult to comprehend.

Secondly, in the subtitle Delacroix specified “waiting for death or slavery” to emphasize the importance of this temporal moment before the end of the victims’ lives, or before they became slaves. By using this phrase, he implied they are portrayed in a kind of transient and uncertain state between life (or liberty) and death (enslavement). Salon critics noted this ambiguity and argued that the figures states’ ranged, according to their descriptions, from almost dead, dead, and simultaneously (and confusingly) alive and dead. Some critics offered general observations of the entire group of figures, such as Auguste Chauvin’s description of the Greeks as “a cold assemblage of men, women,

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262 Lucy MacClintock addressed this idea in her dissertation, in which she argued that Delacroix’s depiction of a fragmented scene comprised of mini-episodes was related to his belief that a painting should be perceived simultaneously via short episodic scenes. She claims this may have been related to his ideas on the practice of reading and looking at art where one should only be confronted by excerpts or bits of abbreviated information, such as in a dictionary. See Lucy Marion MacClintock, Romantic ‘Actualité’: Contemporaneity and Execution in the Work of Delacroix, Vernet, Scheffer, and Sigalon (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1993), 204-212. Delacroix began writing a dictionary in 1857. However, he first mentioned writing a memorandum on painting in his Journal on January 26, 1824. For several years he recorded his thoughts on the reception of reading and looking and the inability to completely understand a book or painting in an instant because of the time required to read or observe. Furthermore, Margaret MacNamidhe describes Delacroix’s use of “scenes” as a “strategy of dispersal” to distract viewers and slow their observation of the painting. He achieved this, in her opinion, by the series of ripples and curves or compositional lines in a single grouping, such as the Turk on horseback and the enslaved girl that draw the viewer’s attention to a relatively small area and make the viewer unable to look at the painting as an integrated whole. Other examples of distracting elements, such as blurred details or the enigmatic smile of the central Greek male, instigated a “sudden snaring of attention” with the intention to make the “viewer hover in a state of perplexity.” See MacNamidhe, The Dilemma of Painting in the 1824 Salon: A New Interpretation of Eugène Delacroix (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2002), 99 and 212.

263 MacNamidhe, 100.
and children who are dead or ready to take their last breath” or Delécluze’s interpretation of them as having “enough strength to smell the approaches of death.” Others addressed how the victims are already in the transition from life to death; they focused on the figures’ skin as a sign of their physiological state. For example, Pillet noticed symptoms of decay and argued that the figures’ “fleshtones foretell dissolution and putrefaction,” suggesting the marks of early death were apparent and they were dying. Critics seemingly began to understand the idea that what was perceived as livid skin actually indicated a dying body progressing toward death. The anonymous author in Le Mercure du dix-neuvième siècle perceptively acknowledged the bodies as “already marked by the imprint of destruction and the livid color which announce the second stage of death.” Again, he too suggested they are dying, not dead.

These aspects were discussed more specifically about certain figures, such as the small vignette of a mother and infant. In the lower right foreground, a partially nude woman, whose legs are cut off by the right edge of the frame, lies on the ground. She leans her head against an elderly woman sitting behind her while the rest of her body lies flat with arms thrown down to the side. She is seemingly unable to move and lacks the ability to help the nude infant crawling on her stomach. Searching for his sustenance, the child nuzzles his mouth to his mother’s abdomen and with one hand he tugs on her dress while the other hand grabs her breast; without her assistance, he must feel his way to nourishment. This common topos of massacre and plague imagery may have been

\[264\] Ch. [Auguste Chauvin], Gazette de France, September 1, 1824, 4. “c’est le froid assemblage d’hommes, des femmes et d’enfants mort ou prêt à rendre le dernier soupir.” D. [Delécluze], Le Moniteur universel, September 8, 1824, 1226. “il leur reste assez le force pour sentir les approches de la mort.”


inspired by Nicolas Poussin’s *Plague at Ashdod* (1630, Musée du Louvre, Paris), among other similar paintings with dying or dead mothers, that were familiar to Delacroix. He may have seen the painting, *L’Épave* from 1821, formerly attributed to Marie-Françoise-Constance Mayer-Lamartinière (the apprentice and lover of Pierre-Paul Prud’hon), which shows a mother lying on a beach in a comparable position to Delacroix’s woman and the baby crawling on her stomach (Figure 3.3). Another possible source, revealed in a journal entry, comes from his recollection of a visit with Colonel Olivier Voutier who, while in Greece, had witnessed a child searching for his mother’s breast even as she lay dead on the ground.²⁶⁷

Although Delacroix’s mother lacks any obvious blood or death-invoking wound, she appears dead at first glance. Her long dark hair provides a stark contrast to the livid (but not quite putrefied) skin on her chest, upper abdomen, neck, and face. Her pale skin, like the morbid colors of her lips, is one of the most fallible signs of death and suggests that she may be in a state of *la mort apparente*. Recent medical research had determined that “it is certain that the circulation of blood perhaps slowed and even suspended, at least in appearance, during a more or less long time, without the principles of life to be extinct.”²⁶⁸ This is further supported by her comatose body unable to move. But she is shown with a partially open eye and mouth that are often construed as parted lips.

MacNamidhe suggests her “mouth appears to have fallen slightly open” as a result of


²⁶⁸ Pineau, 22. “Il est certain que la circulation du sang peut-être ralenti et même suspendue, du moins en apparence, pendant un temps plus ou moins long, sans pour cela que le principe de la vie soit éteint.”
Even if the mother’s open mouth would indicate breathing or gasping, at the same time, the grayish-purple color on her lips hints of death.

Because of these characteristics, reviewers interpreted the mother in various states of dying, death, or avoided making any definite identification. One critic merely referred to her as the “unfortunate mother whose livid body seems inanimate.” Unable to bring himself to identify this figure as dead, he instead insinuated the possibility of a lifeless body. Other critics, such as “Amateur,” seemed completely undecided as to whether she was alive or dead. He claimed the mother “has drawn her last breath” which would suggest death but he then implied she was dying when he opined “neither life nor death has ever given such a color to anyone.” Ayard and Flocon, two liberal critics writing together, saw “a young mother […] who has lost consciousness.” They used the ambiguous state of unconsciousness to avoid any conclusive judgment of her as alive or dead. More assertively, Stendhal and Thiers judged her as “already dead” and “stretched out dead,” respectively. Recently Grigsby interpreted Delacroix’s portrayal of the mother with similar boldness. She unequivocally believes that Delacroix experienced a kind of aesthetic pleasure “in depicting the jaundiced dead woman’s clenched, draped hand” due to his handling of the paint and choice of colors in this area.

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269 MacNamidhe, 101.
274 Grigsby, 276.
in his painted depiction of this figure’s death. For almost two centuries, a unanimous opinion on the mother’s state has defied agreement; one is left to accept that Delacroix has portrayed her in an uncertain existence between life and death recognized by his use of characteristics associated with the living, the dead, and some of the fallible signs of *la mort apparente*.

Near the center of the composition extends an almost nude male who warrants as much attention as the mother figure. The young man, seated on the ground, wears a scarf loosely wrapped around his neck and a piece of embroidered cloth around his waist that covers his groin. His tan body is highlighted by hints of livid and pale tones most noticeable on his cheeks, arm, chest, and thighs. Framed by his dark hair and beard, his face draws attention due to his slightly open exhaling mouth—excitedly described by Delacroix in his *Journal* as “O! the smile of the dying man!”—and his intensely staring eyes transfixed toward something in the distance.\(^{275}\) Enticed by his smile, Thiers referred to him in his Salon review as the “man who is dying while smiling with rage” which undeniably meant the victim was, at least, still alive.\(^{276}\) His facial features, if nothing else, give the impression of life and pathos to an otherwise motionless body.

Yet, the Greek man is one of few figures who appear with bloody wounds indicative of his defeat and possibly death. The palm of his right hand is covered in blood that also pools on the ground next to him. His right arm is outlined by more blood that extends from his shoulder down his chest and arm, where the color blends into the red-striped scarf draped across his female companion. A bleeding wound—the source of the dripping blood—possibly under this same arm or on his shoulder, remains obscured.

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\(^{275}\) 7 May 1824, *Journal*, 39.

\(^{276}\) Thiers, “Salon de 1824,” *Le Constitutionnel*, August 30, 1824, 3, “*un homme qui expire en souriant de fureur.*”
as is another injury seemingly located on the left side of his torso. In this area, the man’s abdomen and the cloth covering his groin are lightly tinged with blood. Inspired by the blood, Ayard and Flocon claimed he is “exhausted of blood and life,” hence, dead—but then described him as “one who is dying, rent by a horrible wound from which blood flows” and later that he “already” possesses the “traces of the immobility of death.”

Delécluze, however, addressed this figure as “wounded [and] bleeding” implying he is still alive. Delacroix has presented visual evidence of death through seeping wounds with concealed sources, in an attempt to add intrigue to this victim’s state. Conversely, the artist emphasized the man’s obviously dire predicament with his swollen and reddened moribund eyes. However, blood-shot or a “loss of shine” in the eyes was not a real sign of death.

Like the well-toned athletic figures portrayed in Géricault’s *Raft of the ‘Medusa,’* this man appears muscular and fit; his open breathing mouth suggests he is still alive but his body’s lack of movement, his bleeding wounds, and his reddened eyes more likely indicate he is dying.

Stendhal, most perceptively, acknowledged this state in his ambiguous characterization of this man as a “great animated cadaver.” His description coincidentally echoed one of Delacroix’s opinions of himself in 1824. In his *Journal* and a letter, he confessed, “in my present state of indifference I am no better than a living corpse” and reiterated it three years later when he lamented, “how unbearable is the

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277 Ayard and Flocon, 13. “épuisé de sang et de vie”; “Un d’entre eux expire déchiré par une horrible blessure dont le sang coule à flots noirs”; “Le reste de ses traits a déjà l’immobilité de la mort.”


burden of this living corpse?\textsuperscript{281} This phrase may be fittingly applied as well to the Greek male who appears both alive and dead.

Other figures are not as notably ambiguous but, nonetheless, possess confusing features that contribute to the overall sense of uncertainty evoked by the painting. On the far left of the composition, two embracing young boys project a palpable contrast to each other that exemplifies Delacroix’s ability to simultaneously distinguish and blur the differences between livid and life-like skin tones. Thiers described this couple sitting on the ground as “two brothers—one of whom is nearly without consciousness, and the other, who has all the vivacity of affections at the moment of death.”\textsuperscript{282} He does not specifically designate the pale-faced child as dead but instead, identifies a vague state of being “without consciousness.” The other boy exists (or is portrayed), he suggested, at the precipice of death or, in other words, at the moment at which life is separated from death. More recently Grigsby astutely described the child’s “eerily blanched, moonlike face” in an attempt to define his livid death-like appearance but avoided a direct attribution of him as dead or alive.\textsuperscript{283} The truth probably lies in a combination of all these observations. A blurred coexistence of both life and death occurs in these two figures by way of their intertwinement. Their physical connection causes them to appear as one distorted body with two heads, two legs, a torso, and one upper arm. Collectively they possess a healthy life-like complexion and a deathly pallor that creates the semblance of one figure who is perceived as dead and alive, or somewhere in between.

\textsuperscript{281} 4 June 1824, \textit{Journal}, 45; Delacroix to Soulier, 21 September 1824, \textit{Selected Letters}, 97.
\textsuperscript{283} Grigsby, 275.
Behind this couple sits a man and a boy, interpreted as his son, who drapes his arms over the man’s chest and lap while hopelessly gazing up to catch his father’s attention. Injured and unable to offer comfort to his child, the father holds his bleeding wound on his torso as he patiently waits for death or slavery. His blood inconspicuously blends with the embroidery of his coat and the garment of the Turk located behind him. Delacroix may have intended this as a hint of the man’s mortality but cleverly painted him with some liveliness to still perplex the viewer, who remains uncertain if he is alive or dying. Mindful of this possibility, Thiers’ romanticized reading of this pair focused on their emotional and pathetic story as it unfolds. He lamented that the “son wants in vain to give the last affections to his father, who, with his red eyes and desperation, seems to be deaf to all hope, as he is to all consolation.” However, Thiers had varied his interpretation a month earlier and explicitly remarked on the father’s imminent death: “his eyes red with fury, he no longer dreams of anything more than dying.” Thiers implied the father’s death through his lack of hope but also suggested the notion that the man is, at least, thinking of dying. In light of this interpretation, one can assume the father has already succumbed to the transitional phase that exists between life and death.

In the controversial Massacres at Chios Delacroix has portrayed an uncertainty inherent in the suffering and waiting endured by the victims of Chios. He achieved this in the depiction of figures as defeated and in a heroic confrontation with death in which they appear with the ambiguous qualities of the living, the dead, and the dying. Thus, the figures exist somewhere in between. Delacroix, moreover, emphasized a sense of


temporality by the creation of a fragmented series of vignettes that lack any narrative or cohesion to carry the viewer throughout the composition. Instead, one views the image in discrete moments of observation of individual scenes. This issue coupled with the difficulty of discerning the actual state of the victims recalls the uncertainty and the progression of time of a *status viatoris*.

**Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi**

Two years after *Massacres at Chios*, Delacroix returned to a Greek theme and an example of Orientalism in *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, which depicts a female allegorical figure set amidst a war-torn environment replete with ruined buildings and ramparts, fragments of corpses, and a solitary male conqueror (Figure 3.4). Like the *Massacres at Chios*, this painting was about recent horrific events during the Greek War of Independence, specifically the carnage that occurred in Missolonghi from April 22 – 25, 1826. The painting was created in two months for a philhellenic charity exhibit, *Exposition au profit des Grecs*, held at the Galerie Lebrun, and intended to benefit the victims of the Greek wars. Because of this, *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi* has

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286 The literature on *Greece* is more limited than that on Delacroix’s other large paintings from this same period. For a detailed bibliography see Johnson, I: 69.
287 Delacroix submitted the painting for the second installment of the exhibit in August but it was too late to be included in the exhibition catalogue; therefore, no official title of the painting is known from 1826. See M.B. [Boutard], “Seconde Exposition en faveur des Grecs,” *Journal des Débats*, September 2, 1826, 3. Boutard referred to the painting in his description as, “*un tableau de M. Delacroix, représentant ‗La Grèce encore debout sur les ruines de Missolonghi.‘” The painting was shown again in 1851 in an exhibition at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux under the title, “*La Grèce sur les ruines de Missolonghi (allégorie).’*” See *Correspondance générale d’Eugène Delacroix*, éd. André Joubin, (Paris: Plon, 1935-37), III: 84. After the Musée des Beaux-Arts purchased the painting, it was inexplicably printed in museum’s catalogue in 1856 under a new title, *Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi*. This new title conveyed a different meaning; the painting was now about her death as opposed to the real victims who died in Missolonghi. The erroneous title and its meaning remained for more than one hundred years until Lee Johnson corrected the mistake in 1964 by arguing that Delacroix had never used the word *expirant* in his descriptions. See P. Lacour and J. Delpit, *Catalogue des Tableaux…du Musée de Bordeaux* (Bordeaux: Imp. Duviella, 1856), 37 and 39, no. 106, cited by Johnson in, “The Delacroix Centenary in France—II,” *The Burlington Magazine* 106, “French Nineteenth-Century Paintings and Sculpture” (June 1964): 261. “*La Grèce expirant sur les ruines de Missolonghi.* Why is this famous picture invariably given this title in French catalogues, when Delacroix always refers to it simply as *La Grèce sur les ruines de Missolonghi*?
long been construed as political propaganda whose effectiveness stems from Delacroix’s use of a female allegorical figure. As scholars have focused on the central figure’s pose and expression, the peripheral elements in the painting (such as the arm of a crushed soldier in the foreground and three small heads placed on a stone wall in the left middle ground) have been ignored. However, these bodies depicted as fragments are equally important to the painting and merit further attention. This section will focus on how Delacroix’s use of fragments of corpses to portray the dead Missolonghians simultaneously alludes to their former lives and their present state in death. Moreover, even as he portrays the figure of Greece, he remarks on the future population of Missolonghi as well. This painting can thus be seen as being about life and heroic death. Delacroix has built upon his portrayal of this theme from *Dante and Virgil in Hell* and *Massacres at Chios* and has moved away from an emphasis on the physiologic characteristics of the body. In *Greece* he explored the differences and similarities between life and death in fragments of bodies and, to a certain degree, the presence of blood that resulted in the representation of figures in the ambiguous period after life but before death.

In the center of the composition stands the seductively beautiful figure of Greece with her ample cleavage. In this feminine and eroticized pose she confronts the viewer with her open-armed gesture that asks for support. Delacroix drew on a variety of sources to create this woman. Based upon his preliminary studies for a figure of Greece

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288 Jobert offers a short description of the fragments, see *Delacroix*, 127-128; Kallmyer does not mention the heads and the soldier’s arm in *French Images from the Greek War of Independence*, and Grigsby is the only scholar to pursue a complex interpretation of the heads and the arm beyond their possible literary sources; see her *Extremities*, 281-314.
from 1821, it is apparent that he borrowed from images of the Virgin Mary as well as from other canonical depictions of motherhood and women, including a scene of Rhea Silvia nursing Romulus and Remus, a detail of Niobe holding one of her slain children from the Niobid sarcophagus in the Vatican, and the kneeling mother in the center of David’s *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* (1799, Musée du Louvre, Paris) (Figure 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8). 

A small but significant detail marking an influence from classical imagery is the headdress seen on the figure of Greece which recalls the crown worn by Tyche, an ancient female civic personification. Borrowing from these sources, Delacroix created an allegory of Greece and specifically a kind of heroine for the Greek cause. However, despite her strong feminine associations, she appears somewhat weak in her hopeless, pleading stance. Gaehngens called the figure of Greece an untraditional heroine, who is “lost, alone and threatened,” which suggests she is defeated. Instead of offering a strong and hopeful allegory of the country and the city, Delacroix has depicted a complacent and sexualized woman.

Her titillating sexuality may have been the inspiration behind Delacroix’s portrayal of this allegorical figure. Drawing on her sexual nature, both Grigsby and Kallmyer have explored this aspect of the figure of Greece. Grigsby’s reading of this woman as a symbol of white harem slavery focused on the ways in which her sex and

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290 Trapp, 68-69.

291 Gaehngens, 123. “Cette figure, enfin, n’est pas celle d’une héroïne au sens traditionnel du terme: elle est perdue, seule et menacée.”
sexuality are visually implied. In effect, Grigsby suggests that she is exposed and susceptible to penetration due to:

a series of frontally disposed, darkened openings that rise up the picture’s surface. [...] The woman’s white gown falls down her thighs and draws together in a long darkened slit between her legs. This implicitly closed orifice is answered, however, by its open double at right where the over-garment inexplicably rises up and out, revealing its white lining and enlarging the dark reddened orifice—once a slit, now full and deep like a vulva opened wide.

Kallmyer, however, considered contemporary philhellenic literature and its illustrated personifications of Greece and Liberty as sources for Delacroix’s feminine and perhaps erotic figure. The philhellenic images typically depicted sexualized women either nude or partially clothed in shredded garments and slightly wounded and they were sometimes masochistically chained to ruins. Kallmyer also observed in the contemporary songs and poems that blood was a common characteristic associated with the figure of Greece.

Adamantios Corais’ poem of 1801, translated into French in 1821, presents an image of Greece who “bathes us in her blood.” Even more pertinent, during the war Dionysios Solomos wrote a song which included a description of a personification of Liberty that Kallmyer suggested bore an “unmistakable resemblance” to Delacroix’s figure of Greece. “And from your dress flowed the blood, the blood of the Greeks!”

References:

293 Ibid., 288.
295 Ibid., 96.
In light of these observations, the figure of Greece can be seen as indicative of life due to her overtly sexual nature and the presence of blood which can be associated with her. Delacroix’s figure represents the life that could still exist in the destroyed town, as the woman is a being with life-giving capacity and she is capable of reproduction. This is implied by the blood, specifically what can be interpreted as her menstrual blood, painted in a translucent impasto on a flat and tilting stone directly below her. The uppermost stain of blood on the stone, a bright red spot from which the rest of the blood descends, could have been caused by a heavy drip from above, from the figure of Greece. This drip conveniently occurs in line with the subtle s-shaped and dark crevice on the folds of her dress; there is no doubt this fold refers to the lines and slits that comprise her inner thighs and genitalia. These associations between folds and female anatomy that Grigsby sees as erotic also evoke fertility; she represents the life that can exist again in Missolonghi.

An entirely different meaning is conveyed by the bodiless arm shown below the figure of Greece. Between two rocks on the right edge of the frame, a forearm is covered in a blue sleeve with a red cuff and edged with gold fringe. The arm culminates in a masculine yet livid and limp dead hand that extends over the barrel of a crushed cannon. Why an arm? A leg, foot, torso, or head could have protruded from under the stones and suggested a lifeless corpse. However, an arm evokes action such as firing a gun toward an ammunition mine. After suffering through a long siege, highlighted by famine and disease, the Greeks took their own lives by detonating their local garrisons, in the process destroying themselves, the buildings, and the city ramparts. This arm alludes to the action performed by those responsible for creating this destruction. Delacroix has thus minimized this part of the story and reduced it to a fragment of a corpse.
For Delacroix the depiction of a dead arm held personal meaning in terms of its sources and inspirations. The forearm, gently bent at the wrist with long extended drooping fingers unquestionably refers to the arm of Delacroix painted by Géricault for the figure lying face down in the *Raft of the ‘Medusa’* (Figure 2.13). Delacroix sketched this same arm as it is portrayed in the *Raft* on several occasions and most likely referred to these studies years later while painting *Greece* (Figure 3.9 and 3.10). He even reminded himself of this arm in his journal on April 22, 1824: “Remember the arm of the figure that he made from me.”297 The arm in *Greece* is, however, shown visually severed by the stones instead of attached to a body as it appears in the *Raft*. This fragment may more immediately recall the painted studies of limbs by Géricault or Champmartin. We know for certain that Delacroix had seen Géricault’s *Anatomical Fragments* (now in the Musée Fabre, Montpellier) by 1857 when he described it in his journal.298 It is quite probable, although not documented, that by 1826 he had seen any number of these paintings since he was friends with both men. In a sense, Delacroix may have wanted to monumentalize the arm and give it an importance that Géricault and Champmartin accomplished in their works.

Another possible explanation for this bodiless arm has more pertinence to the subject of Missolonghi and is equally significant to Delacroix. In 1952 George Heard Hamilton suggested *Greece* was a memorial to Lord Byron, who died at Missolonghi in 1824. Hamilton cites other paintings by Delacroix that were inspired by Byron’s *Oriental Tales* and *The Giaour* to support his argument that the English poet had, again,

298 March 5, 1857, *Journal*, 383.
motivated Delacroix to create an oriental scene.\textsuperscript{299} Several of Hamilton’s comparisons between Byron’s \textit{The Bride of Abydos} and Delacroix’s painting are loose interpretations and somewhat unconvincing. For instance, \textit{Greece} cannot be seen entirely as a memorial to Byron instead of the Greeks. However, Hamilton’s suggestion that the arm is based on a passage about Selim’s dead arm and hand from \textit{The Bride of Abydos} is convincing and intriguing for this study. In Byron’s description of Selim’s body floating in the sea, he describes Selim’s hand: “That hand—whose motion is not life—Yet feebly seems to menace strife.”\textsuperscript{300} The hand is dead, or absent of life, but Byron states that it still suggests a faint animation; it can therefore be interpreted as both dead and alive. In his journal Delacroix recorded his own impression of Selim’s hand: “His body tossed about by the waves and that hand—especially that hand—held up by the waves as they break and spend themselves upon the shore. This is sublime, and it is his alone.”\textsuperscript{301} He does not mention the hand’s dual nature, as seemingly dead and alive, but this aspect is nonetheless still apparent in his painting. This can be seen where the soldier’s dead arm protruding from the stone slabs mimics Selim’s bodiless arm that floats above the waves and both seem to eerily hover without any known or visible source. Life is certainly not present in the soldier’s hand but it clearly “seems to menace strife” with its strained gesture and pathos. Delacroix borrowed the image of a visually severed arm from Géricault and Byron, and drew inspiration from his own sketches—all of which carried some sort of personal associations and attests to the notion that the often-overlooked arm and hand possesses a greater meaning and significance than initially assumed.

\textsuperscript{301} May 11, 1824, \textit{Journal}, 40.
Delacroix repeated his depiction of fragments of bodies in the form of three severed heads, barely visible except to the discerning eye, sitting on a stone wall near the left edge of the frame. Similar in rounded shape and gray-tan color, the heads easily blend with the stones that comprise the wall. Their subtle presence suggests the realistic nature of this scene, and also carries a complicated and significant meaning integral to the story of Missolonghi. During the French Revolution, and more recently in the Restoration, severed heads were humiliatingly displayed as trophies or symbols of defeat. In this painting, Delacroix has alluded to this idea by portraying them as objects that testify to the Greek’s defeat and the brutality of the Turks. However, these heads have other connotations; they equally imply the heroic deaths that occurred at Missolonghi because of the way in which they are deliberately depicted as fragments.

Of the two reviewers of this painting in 1826, Victor Hugo was the only one to remark on the heads.\(^{302}\) Amidst his praise of *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi* he mentioned some of its details: “This triumphant Egyptian, these severed heads, these stones stained with blood, all of it has something so moving!”\(^{303}\) Hugo may have noted their presence because these heads are most likely a reference to his poem, *Les têtes du sérail*, published in *Journal des Débats* in June 1826 and later included in his collection, *Les Orientales*, from 1829. The poem is a musing on the perversions and enslavement of women in Turkish harems and the violence and brutality, exemplified by the decapitated heads that occurred during the revolutionary period in Greece and Turkey. In *Les têtes*

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\(^{303}\) Ibid., 984. “Cet Egyptien qui triomphe, ces têtes coupées, ces pierres teintés de sang, tout cet ensemble a quelque chose de si pathétique!”
**du sérail**, Hugo gives a voice to three severed heads that are impaled on spikes outside of a harem and who individually speak about their deaths and the suffering of concubines. Hugo cites the names of the heads as Notis Botzaris (a general in charge at Missolonghi), Constantine Canaris (a naval captain made famous in a battle in 1822), and the Bishop Joseph of Rogous (who gave the final absolution to the people in Missolonghi on April 22, 1826). Although only Botzaris and the Bishop died at Missolonghi, all three men became famously associated with the Greek War of Independence and were considered as contemporary local heroes. A few excerpts from the poem give an idea of Hugo’s intentions to glorify the men while calling attention to their horrific severed state.

Livid, lifeless eyes, heavy black hair,
These heads on parallel rows, [ . . . ]

Dominating the harem, at the fatal door,
Three of them marked the eastern arch,
These heads, that the raven flutters about,
Seemed to have received the murderous attack,
The one in battle, the other in prayer,
The last in the tomb. [ . . . ]

Your glories are not stifled by death:
Your heads without tombs become your trophies;
Your remains are a monument! [ . . . ]

Pleiad of heroes! Trinity of martyrs!

Given Delacroix’s penchant for borrowing subjects from ephemeral sources, it seems quite plausible he would have been inspired by Hugo’s poem for creative stimulation.


Although Hugo and Delacroix differ in their placement of the heads on spikes or a wall, they both imply the idea that these heads mark the experience of heroic deaths. Delacroix intended to remind the viewer—specifically the sympathetic philhellene—of the heroism displayed during the battle and siege at Missolonghi and did this by using exactly three heads that had recently been cited in popular culture and held particular associations to either dead and living heroes. Like Hugo, he portrayed them as horrific fragments indicative of torture and pain but in the painting they are peripheral; no longer the central subject, they are a subtle detail but a forceful expression of their memorable heroic death.

However, the severed heads and the arm were not enough to emphasize the reality of this scene as a recent event. This was accomplished in the splashes of blood painted on the stone wall under the heads and on the tilting stone in the foreground. Delacroix draws our attention to this blood by placing it closest to the viewer and uses the hand of the soldier’s arm to gently gesture toward it. Blood is a detail usually associated with a wound; however, this blood, interpreted in a way other than connected with the figure of Greece, is not identified with any wound or person. Delacroix may have added the wet, dripping blood to imply the recentness of the events at Missolonghi and the sense of immediacy inherent in the image, such as the streams of fresh blood seen falling from decapitated heads of guillotined victims. A popular example of this technique would be Villeneuve’s *Matière à refection[sic] pour les jongleurs couronnées, qu’un sang impur abreuve nos sillons* (1791, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et photographie, Paris) which quotes lyrics from *La Marseillaise* and shows Louis XVI’s severed head. Blood dripping from his neck signified it had recently been cut and

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306 See Boime, *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution*, 219; and Grigsby, 297.
underscored its actuality. But also, according to some doctors, fresh flowing blood indicated that the head may not yet be dead. In light of this, the blood on the stone in *Greece* not only indicates the recentness and realism of the scene at Missolonghi but also hints of the possibility that although the soldier’s arm and the severed heads appear dead, they may still sense life.

The manifestation of the heads and the arm as both dead and alive or somewhere in between can also be perceived by the way in which they are depicted as the remains or fragments of those who have heroically died in Missolonghi. These fragments are like classical ruins found in ancient Greece shown heaped upon and intermingled with the fallen ramparts.  

Ruins had an established history scattered next to allegorical figures of Greece in popular philhellenic prints, as shown by Kallmyer.  

She argued that Delacroix may have found inspiration in popular prints for *Greece* where a female figure is surrounded by emblems of the ancient world—architectural ruins, broken columns, statues, and books—as a way of invoking the rich cultural past of Greece.  

This may be true, but for Delacroix, the inclusion of architectural ruins not only symbolizes the remains of a dead or past culture, but also symbolizes the lives of those who thrived in that culture. Despite their seemingly inert lifeless state—broken and out-of-use—his ruins, an amalgamation of architectural and fragments of bodies, allude to the life that once existed; like the classical ruins, the heads and arm are symbolically alive while simultaneously appearing dead. The fragments of corpses represent both life and death.

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307 Boime, 217. He states that Missolonghi was never associated with classical Greece. For my purposes, I interpret ruins as a general allusion to all of classical Greece and not just Missolonghi.

308 Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *French Images from the Greek War of Independence*, 95-100.

309 Ibid., 100.
While the figure of Greece in *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi* may be a defeated allegorical figure requesting our sympathy or perceived as a titillating sexualized display of an Oriental woman intended for the male gaze, there are many other messages of life and rebirth within the details of the work that clarify the overall meaning of the painting. The figure of Greece can now more interestingly be understood as symbolic of life, while the oft-overlooked arm and heads, in their references to life as well as death, can be seen as representative of the idea of a *status viatoris*. Delacroix’s propagandistic and curious painting of war’s aftermath that privileges a monumental fertile and maternal woman surrounded by small fragments of dead Missolonghians inspires one to consider this image not just as a simple allegory but as a deeper expression of the lives, the heroic deaths, and the rebirth of those from Missolonghi.

*Death of Sardanapalus*

In late February 1828 Delacroix unveiled what he referred to as his “second Massacre,” *Death of Sardanapalus*, at the Salon (Figure 3.1). This “Massacre” returned to a literary and historical subject rather than a contemporary event like the siege at Missolonghi. The quiet stillness of heroic death in the *Massacres at Chios* and *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi* was replaced with an energetic portrayal of murder and suicide set in an exotic environment. Despite this dramatic difference in subject matter and tone, *Death of Sardanapalus* shares with the earlier works a portrayal of the figures in various stages of life and death. In this painting, however, Delacroix now emphasizes the figures’ actions and gestures to define or disguise their particular states and depicts an imminent death—Sardanapalus’ heroic death despite failure and defeat—which are ambiguously situated in and become a metaphor for a *status viatoris*, respectively.

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310 Delacroix to Soulier, 6 February 1828, *Selected Letters*, 144.
My reading focuses on only one aspect of this painting that, for the most part, is an Orientalist fantasy and visual celebration of the sexuality, sensuality, and richness of an exotic world. This can be seen in Delacroix’s exploration of the decadence and excess of Sardanapalus’ empire replete with luscious colors, gratuitous nudity, and licentious behaviors. *Death of Sardanapalus* has thus been interpreted as an expression of Delacroix’s repressed libido, a political remark on the appearance and reception of Charles V and among other readings, a manifestation of Romantic ideals inspired by poets and writers.\(^{311}\) The representation of death was vital to this subject but it was not the central concern for Delacroix and the overall meaning of the image. I intend to pursue a greater understanding of the painting with regard to previous interpretations and in light of a new examination of Delacroix’s portrayal of death in 1827.

*Death of Sardanapalus* is based on the story of the last Assyrian king of Ninevah whose empire was invaded by a conquering army. In 876 BCE, after enduring a two-year siege in his palace, he ordered the deaths of his concubines and eunuchs and he committed suicide rather than be captured or killed by his enemy.\(^{312}\) In 1821, Lord Byron published his play *Sardanapalus*, based on this story, which probably inspired Delacroix to paint an early oil sketch.\(^{313}\) The differences between Byron and Delacroix’s versions of the death of Sardanapalus have been noted by several scholars who suggest Delacroix invented aspects of the scene in addition to drawing on multiple sources other than Byron. Most notably Beatrice Farwell proposed that Delacroix utilized a still-

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\(^{311}\) See Jack J. Spector, *Delacroix: The Death of Sardanapalus*; Fraser, “Delacroix’s Sardanapalus: The Life and Death of the Royal Body,” in *Delacroix, Art, and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France*, 115-158.

\(^{312}\) The legend of Sardanapalus was created by Ktesias (Ctesias) in the *Persika* during the fourth century BCE, rewritten by Diodorus Siculus, and reported by Herodotus.

\(^{313}\) Baron Charles Rivet relayed that while he read parts of Byron’s play, particularly the dénouement of Sardanapalus, Delacroix feverishly painted the oil sketch. See Achille Piron, *Eugène Delacroix: sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris: J. Claye, 1865), 70.
unidentified text based upon his long quote (with inverted commas and ellipses) that accompanied the title included in the Salon pamphlet and his mention of the character, Aïscheh, that is not found in any known story of Sardanapalus.\footnote{The full title listed in Salon livret: “Death of Sardanapalus. The refugees are besieged in his palace...Lying on a superb bed, atop an immense pyre, Sardanapalus orders his eunuchs and palace officers to slit the throats of his women, his pages, and even his horses and favorite dogs; none of the objects that served his pleasure should survive him...Aïsheh, a Bactrian woman, will not allow a slave to kill her and hangs herself from the columns supporting the vault...Baleah, Sarandapalus’s cupbearer, finally sets fire to the pyre and throws himself in,” quoted in Barthélémy Jobert, Delacroix (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 82; Beatrice Farwell, “Sources for Delacroix’s Death of Sardanapalus,” Art Bulletin 40 (1958): 66-71; for other opinions on Delacroix’s sources, see Jack J. Spector, Delacroix: ‘The Death of Sardanapalus,’ 68-69; Frederick Bohrer, “Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth-Century England and France,” Art Bulletin 80 (1998): 338-341; and Johnson, The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix, I:117.}

Delacroix’s portrayal of the legend of Sardanapalus appears on an overwhelming scale: a massive composition, almost four by five meters, comprised of bold red, brown, white, and green colors and chaotic writhing figures that result in an unorganized mass of colors and lines. The awkward perspective of the bed, on which Sardanapalus lies, aids in the construction of the remaining space in the scene and adds to the disconcerting and disproportionate scale of figures in the background in relation to those in the foreground. Like the Massacres at Chios, the Sardanapalus is comprised of isolated groups of figures which contributed to its compositional faults. The bodies are mostly connected via curvilinear lines but the frequent broken patterns produce an interrupted experience of looking. Barthélémy Jobert observed how “the gaze wanders from one piece of the picture to another without being able really to distinguish a principal figure. […] Delacroix has again subverted the traditional principles of composition.”\footnote{Jobert, 83.} Because of this, the viewer is unable to comfortably rest his eyes on any one area and feel a sense of calm or pleasure and is left perplexed by the disarray.
This sense of annoyance when observing the painting may have been an honest reaction by the viewer to the overall uncertainty and confusion that emanates from the compositional construction of this dramatic and morbid subject. Delécluze, in particular, felt annoyed by Delacroix’s spectacle. He famously complained:

In vain, one tries to shed light on the thoughts of the painter in composing his work; the intelligence of the viewer could not penetrate the subject, the details of which are isolated, where the eye cannot disentangle the confusion of lines and colors, where the first rules of art seem to have been deliberately violated. *Sardanapalus* is an error of painting.\(^{316}\)

Even Delacroix’s friend, Jal, expressed a similar dismay: “He [Delacroix] wanted to compose disorder and he forgot that disorder itself has logic; he wanted to frighten us with the spectacle of the barbaric sensual delights that satisfy Sardanapalus’ hungry eyes before they forever close, but reason cannot disentangle the idea from the chaos in which it is imprisoned.”\(^{317}\) This chaos was present in Delacroix’s peculiar use of space and the vantage point prompting Chauvin, writing as an anonymous critic, to ask, “Where are we? On what ground is the scene set?” And he exclaimed: “Such confusion in the foreground! Such an unintelligible mass of objects in the recesses!”\(^{318}\) Apparently, even the well-versed viewers of Salon paintings found the *Sardanapalus* difficult to

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\(^{317}\) Jal, *Esquisses, croquis, pochades, ou tout ce qu’on voudra sur le Salon de 1827* (Paris: A. Dupont, 1828), 312. “Il a voulu composer le désordre, et il a oublié que le désordre lui-même a une logique; il a voulu nous effrayer au spectacle des voluptés barbares dont les yeux de Sardanapale se rassasient avant de se fermer pour toujours; mais le chaos au milieu duquel est emprisonnée son idée, la raison ne le peut débrouiller.”

comprehend; they could not penetrate the confusing web of shapes and lines, make sense of their organization, or realize its vantage point.

Although the painting is titled *Death of Sardanapalus* it is dominated by anonymous figures with almost theatrical expressions of emotions in the midst of murder, suicide, and death. Across the image Delacroix presented the living, recognized by emphatically gesturing, active bodies; the dying, observed on several figures at the moment of being killed or already in progress; and the (supposedly) dead: a single person, Aïscheh, triumphantly shown in the upper central portion of the scene. As will be shown, it seems Delacroix favored the representation of impending death over that of motionless dead bodies in this painting. A closer examination of these bodies will illustrate that they reflect the ambiguous progression sustained within a *status viatoris*.

The group of lifelike bodies is comprised of figures committing murder or unthreatened by death. In the foreground two slaves execute their orders to kill the king’s living possessions, in this case a horse and a concubine. On the left of the scene, a dark-skinned man thrusts a dagger into the horse’s chest while he pulls on the reins with his left hand to control the steed’s wild reaction. Somewhat similarly on the right, a man kneels behind a woman and grasps her left arm in a brute statement of control as he holds a dagger near her neck and chest. Both men evidence vivacity seen in their determined gazes and strained muscles. Not surprisingly, the two liveliest figures are those enacting murders or, in other words, taking away life.

Two other men on the far right of the scene also exhibit lifelike gestures in the form of expressive emotions. A man with an exposed chest looks up to Sardanapalus with his arms stretched out in a direction that follows his gaze. The other man, indicated
by only a head, holds his head with hands and looks down in anguish. They seem to have been a late addition to the composition since they were not present in an early oil sketch (1826-27, Musée du Louvre, Paris) and therefore, may have been added to fill an area with more lines and shapes in an otherwise originally conceived empty space. They may, however, have been intended to broaden the emotional content of the painting.

Delacroix repeated his use of figures with dramatic gestures and devoid of any real mortal threat on both sides of Sardanapalus’ bed. A woman sits with her back against the bed and covers her face with a green silk scarf as if to hide from the violence. She does not display any anguish associated with dying, but more likely expresses emotions indicative of life. The complementary colors in the garments around her—the green scarf, the orange-red dress and bed sheets, and the red turban of the slave in front of her—draw attention to her, making her presence in the composition as significant as those who are dying or dead. On the opposite edge of the bed another woman, only seen from behind, also exhibits grand gestures with outstretched arms and a tilted head but lacks any grave threat of dying. She is positioned in front of Baleah, the king’s cupbearer, who is about to pour oil on the bed. Due to her pose, this woman may be attempting to stop him from setting fire to the bed. Regardless, she is much like other figures who not only serve a formal purpose, but also aggrandize the emotional content of the scene.

Delacroix portrayed the majority of bodies at the cusp of life and death, or what could be perceived as already dying. This is best exemplified by the horse and the standing nude woman in the foreground. Delacroix achieved this portrayal of a dying horse in several ways. He cleverly painted the tassels that fall from the horse’s bridle a
blood red color, and placed them exactly where the dagger has plunged into the horse’s neck. The red tassels symbolize the hot blood that should flow from his mortal wound and indicate his dying state. But instead of showing a horse crippled from the blunt force of the knife, Delacroix conversely depicts the horse with a dynamic, masculine energy; the steed rears up from fear, anger, and pain with great strength.

Dying, or the end of life, is experienced much differently by the writhing female held by a slave. Her languid body seems to have fallen limp from the threat of a knife poised at her throat. Or, her pose may suggest pain because she has already been stabbed. Due to the angle of her body it is impossible to judge if this has actually happened. Regardless, she seems to be in the throes of dying with her head tossed back and her melting body unable to support itself. Her position and expression with open eyes and mouth, almost gasping for air, exude pain, although these characteristics can also be seen to invoke a sensual, erotic pleasure.\(^{319}\) Delacroix has, nonetheless, presented her act of dying as a prolonged event overwhelmed by passivity, pain, and defeat.

Imminent death is resoundingly depicted on other figures whose actions prefigure their demise. In the upper left of the composition, Delacroix portrayed two harem women dressed in their oriental finery and carrying cups and vases of poison that they will soon drink. They move without any consideration of their master who lies directly next to them as they instead focus on their suicidal task. Below them, a dark-skinned woman has more actively engaged her suicidal obligation as she stabs a knife into her chest. Her body is cut off by the frame leaving only her upper torso, arms, and head

\(^{319}\) A subtle but very titillating part of this woman is her upturned foot. This overtly sexualized detail would not have been missed by the average male Parisian. See Linda Nochlin, “The Imaginary Orient,” in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 33-59; and Spector, 99-102.
exposed to display her dying act. Although her action is much more aggressive than that of the two women above her, she too, is devoid of any fearful or remorseful emotion as well as the pain typically associated with dying.

In a slight variation on the formal depiction of figures in a state in between life and death, Delacroix has portrayed bodies and the horse as cut off by the frame. They literally exist on a border—half present and half missing. They furthermore have become the abject in their half-living and half-dead appearance and can be perceived as neither a living body, nor a corpse. Thus, their representation on the border (the frame) suggests that the bodies could ambiguously exist in the liminal abject space between this world and the afterlife. Delacroix was most likely inspired by the partial figures seen in Gros’ *Battle of Eylau* (1806, Musée du Louvre, Paris) and *Napoleon at the Pesthouse in Jaffa* (1804, Musée du Louvre, Paris) or more recently, the figures who are truncated by the raft and the edge of the composition in Géricault’s *Raft of the Medusa.*  

The partially shown bodies in *Sardanapalus* are, likewise, suspended in an indescribable liminal space between life and death.

In their reviews of *Sardanapalus*, Salon critics often avoided reference to specific figures; however, some attention was directed toward the woman lying across the foot of the bed who shows no signs of life, emotion, or pain. She appears dead. An anonymous writer in *Le Figaro* referred to her as “this woman, viewed from the back, who dies on the bed of the tyrant.”  

And similarly, while complimenting the beauty of her right arm,

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Jal described her as “the young female dying on the bed of her master.” Delacroix knew the central location of her prostrate and almost nude body would immediately confront the viewer with a beautiful but lifeless corpse. Yet it is interesting that at least two critics perceived her as dying (i.e., “cette femme [...] qui meurt”; “la jeune femme expirante”).

An obvious example of an allegedly dead body and unique to Delacroix’s version of the Sardanapalus story is Aïscheh. Depicted in the top center of the composition, her seemingly lifeless body, suspended by a noose, hangs motionless and free of any blood or wounds. In a grandiose scene of carnage and energetic movement, she exists alone and becomes a shadowed pivotal point above all other figures. Her body is significant to this study because of the fact that hanging was scientifically considered a lengthy and non-instantaneous event. Sue and Soemmering’s argument that life can exist for a short period of time in a decapitated head, also holds true for a body executed by hanging. A rope tied around the neck cuts off oxygen to the brain, resulting in cerebral hypoxia and eventual cardiac arrest; the body’s organs begin to fail and succumb to a slow sequence of dying. Hence, Aïscheh may not truly be dead but in all actuality suffering in the long transition from life to death. The most apparently-dead body in the

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323 The character of Aïscheh may come from an as yet-unknown text about Sardanapalus that Delacroix referenced. At this time there is no substantial evidence to prove this suspicion. According to the legend of Sardanapalus, his favorite concubine, an Ionian named Myrrha, is the only one who dies with him on his funeral pyre. Myrrha lights the fire and then ascends onto the throne with her master. In his painting Delacroix neglects Myrrha and instead, adds Aïscheh, another willing self-sacrificing victim.
324 See Sue, Opinion du citoyen Sue, professeur de médecine et de botanique, sur le supplice de la guillotine; and Soemmering, Sur le supplice de la guillotine.
325 In the mid to late nineteenth century, methods of hanging were improved to make the execution more humane. The length a body dropped was based upon the weight and height of the victim which would cause the spinal cord to break, making death more immediate. Hanging prior to this development was referred to as a short drop whereby strangulation or lack of oxygen to the brain caused death. See http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hanging.
painting, then, is that of Aïscheh, who may in fact be enduring a prolonged period of dying.

What about Sardanapalus? The painting supposedly represents his death, and yet it is noticeably absent. Sardanapalus is shown alive, reclining on a luxurious bed; he has one arm bent across his body and one supporting his head as he observes the carnage around him. Historians have often asserted that Delacroix depicted a sadomasochistic, effeminate ruler who finds pleasure in the violence and death in front of him. Interpreting within the context of Restoration politics, Elisabeth Fraser has suggested that the figure of Sardanapalus could be seen as a satirical portrayal of the royal body, specifically that of Charles X—not a hero but an effeminate coward. In her astute reading of Sardanapalus she argues that he exemplifies the essence of a “failed masculine authority” as it pertained to the royal body as perverse and a site of inversion in the late Restoration. Contrarily, Delacroix may have recognized Sardanapalus as a Romantic hero somewhat akin to the legend of Napoleon at the bridge of Arcola in 1796; Sardanapalus passively but stoically confronts death in a tumultuous Byronic environment of passion and violence surrounded by a brutal, oncoming battle. The fact that he is poised as “meditative rather than fearful,” like Byron’s Sardanapalus, and maybe pridefully while aware of his imminent end makes his future death even more heroic.

There are similarities between Delacroix’s portrayal of Sardanapalus and contemporary paintings that depicted Napoleon despite the fact that the subject of Death

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326 Fraser, “Delacroix’s Sardanapalus: The Life and Death of the Royal Body:” 320; revised and reprinted in her book, Delacroix, Art, and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France, 115-158.
327 Ibid., 348.
328 Spector, 20.
of Sardanapalus is completely unrelated to Napoleon. Propagandistic images such as Gros’ *Napoleon at the Pesthouse in Jaffa* portrayed Bonaparte as a hero who faces death, much like Sardanapalus, and recalls Delacroix’s painting in subject matter and composition: a ruler surrounded by figures in various stages of life, dying, and death.

The use of an exotic historical figure, like the last king of Ninevah, to symbolize Napoleon could be read as a veiled allusion to the Emperor’s defeat and death, seen by Delacroix as a model for a heroic death of a strong leader. Previously, paintings like Géricault’s *Charging Chasseur* or more appropriately, David’s *Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard Pass* (1800, Musée national du château de Malmaison, Rueil-Malmaison, France) depicted the ideal Napoleonic type of hero as the brave military general willing to face death and die for his country. Compared with the unmitigated patriarchal strength of Napoleon in David’s Empire-era painting, Sardanapalus emerges as a more complex hero at the end of the Restoration, a hero who exists poised and courageous in the face of failure and death. And more poignantly, he shows a ruler about to heroically commit suicide in lieu of capture. Delacroix’s depiction of this heroic side—in particular, Sardanapalus’ lack of fear of death—does seem, however, as if it could have been inspired by Napoleon’s famous statement: “Death is nothing; but to live defeated and without glory is to die every day.”329 In this sense, Sardanapalus becomes more than an exotic and imperious king: he also becomes a figure who recalls Napoleon’s defeat.

Like Gros’ portrayal of an intrigued but cautious Napoleon in *Jaffa*, Sardanapalus comfortably confronts death but remains mostly isolated on his bed from the dying slaves whose deaths foreshadow his own end. He is separated from the dying and dead but he

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notably exists in the middle of it too. His passive participation with those who are dying is such that it becomes a metaphor for his own journey from life to death. In a way, then, the portrayal of Sardanapalus heroically confronting his own death illustrates the uncertain progression of a *status viatoris*.

In *Death of Sardanapalus*, Delacroix focused on the theatrical gestures and poses of figures to imply their state of being instead of relying on the physical characteristics of the body or the subject of the painting to suggest that they are alive, dying, or dead. And, to a certain degree, as he had done in *Massacres at Chios*, he utilized the chaos and lack of organization in the composition to evoke a sense of uncertainty that paralleled the figures’ ambiguous journey toward the unknown or their heroic death. *Sardanapalus* had thus far marked Delacroix’s most ambitious Romantic painting of life and death. However, in his next work he assimilated various techniques used in other paintings previously discussed which resulted in a formidable image. It not only portrayed figures existing in an ambiguous transition between life and death but also shared with the spectator the fear experienced during this heroic confrontation with death.

*July 28: Liberty Leading the People*

In Delacroix’s final painting of the period, *July 28: Liberty Leading the People*, he depicts *le peuple*—the heroes of the July Revolution—as they usher in the end of the Restoration monarchy (Figure 3.12). Standing on top of the improvised barricades, civilian troops and an allegorical figure of Liberty evoke a willingness to sacrifice themselves and die for France. They resurrect an idea of heroic death formerly associated with Napoleon and their sense of commitment, as demonstrated by Delacroix in the painting, brings to mind Musset’s description of the youth during the Empire.
They [the youth] well knew they were destined to the slaughter; but they believed that Murat was invulnerable, and the Emperor had been seen to cross a bridge where so many bullets whistled that they wondered if he were mortal. And even if one must die, what did it matter? Death itself was so beautiful, so noble, so illustrious, in its battle-scarred purple! It borrowed the color of hope, it reaped so many immature harvests that it became young, and there was no more old age. All the cradles of France, as indeed all its tombs, were armed with bucklers; there were no more graybeards, there were only corpses or demi-gods.330

In this image, Delacroix has alluded to Musset’s interpretation of Napoleonic patriotism. However, the artist situates it during *les Trois Glorieuses* in his depiction of a perilous moment of potential heroic death as the civilian fighters confront their enemy (located outside of the scene) and as they embark on a journey from a state of life toward their uncertain future or death. It is these aspects that will be addressed in this section which will focus on how Delacroix portrayed figures poised between life and death in a composition reflective of this progression as well.

*July 28: Liberty Leading the People* illustrates a moment from the July Revolution when workers, Napoleonic veterans, students, artisans, and the bourgeoisie rioted in the streets and battled with Royalist soldiers in response to Charles X’s new ordinances. On July 25 the King had boldly proclaimed more censorship in the press, raised property taxes, dissolved the newly elected Chamber, announced new elections for September, and restricted the number of deputies and electoral body members. The ordinances were then published in *Le Moniteur* on the twenty-sixth.331 The next day, fueled by the press, the people responded by arming themselves and building barricades

and on the twenty-eighth, they began rioting and fighting in the center of Paris. A significant battle occurred when revolutionaries marched over the passerelle de Grève (later renamed pont d’Arcole), from the Île de la Cité, and secured the Hôtel de Ville. It was soon lost to the royal guards but later recaptured by the insurgents that same night and, more or less, marked their victory. The following day the royal guards withdrew from the city, Charles X was dethroned, and Louis-Philippe, Duc d’Orléans was crowned the new king on August 9.

Delacroix portrayed a glimpse of this battle from July 28 viewed from the place de Grève, in front of the Hôtel de Ville, which looks southwest to the Île de la Cité showing the west towers of Notre Dame. In front of a smoke-filled background, Delacroix depicted a group of civilian fighters, most notably: a revolutionary lying in the foreground stripped of his pants, shoes, and one sock; a worker (factory worker, artisan, or mason) holding a saber; a student from the École polytechnique (recognized by his cocked hat); a man in a black frock coat and brown trousers who wears a top hat (haute-de-forme) carrying a shotgun (typically interpreted as a bourgeois but more likely a skilled-artisan); a typographer’s apprentice who wears a red bandana wrapped around his head; a young gamin or street urchin representative of the youth who uninhibitedly participated in the riots; and one Swiss guard soldier lying in the right foreground. Their identifications as members of specific social classes and professions have been questioned by critics and art historians since the painting was exhibited in 1831.

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332 Furet, 322.
333 Johnson, The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix, I: 146.
334 Notre-Dame would have been impossible to see from this position; Delacroix must have opted for artistic license in constructing this battle scene without regard for architectural accuracy.
335 Albert Boime has discussed the social meaning and political context of this painting which predominantly centered on the identification and reception of the figures by Salon critics, see Boime, 243-250. He and others have given a more complete explanation of the figures’ identifications: for instance, the
Delacroix has, mostly likely, portrayed a sampling of the vast array of people who participated in the revolution aside from the allegorical representation of Liberty. This barefoot woman, who holds a musket and carries the tri-couleur, wears a phrygian cap and a long dress that exposes one of her breasts. She leads the group across the timber and stone barricades, over (supposedly) dead bodies in the immediate foreground, and toward the royalist enemy. The figure of Liberty is in many ways a reincarnation of Marianne, the symbol of the Republic, but she may also be considered as a substitute for an absent Napoleonic leader.\textsuperscript{336}

Delacroix’s arrangement of these figures in \textit{Liberty Leading the People} presents a first-hand impression of the battle scene as the fighters charge toward the enemy positioned in the same location as the spectator, outside of the scene. This may have been a result of Delacroix’s personal exposure to the fighting which possibly inspired him to portray the fear and awareness of imminent death as it is experienced by the viewer and the figures. In Alexandre Dumas’ recollection of the July Revolution, he student from the École polytechnique was significant because the polytechniciens became associated with the Bonapartists after they defended Napoleon’s return in 1814. In 1830 they were, to a certain extent, leaders of the revolution. The man in the frock coat was mistakenly identified by Alexandre Dumas as a self-portrait of Delacroix which led to other possible identifications of this figure as a bourgeois, a dandy, a portrait of Frédéric Villot (a close friend of the artist’s), or possibly the well-known ardent Republican Étienne Arago. However, his top hat (or haut-de-forme) has been properly labeled as a soft-brimmed hat similar to the kind worn by the almost-middle-class worker, an artisan-kind, who enjoyed a social status situated between the bourgeois and the worker. Nicos Hadjinicolaou analyzed the identification of the various figures based upon the definition of \textit{le peuple} in 1830 and from the interpretations set forth by Salon critics in light of their respective political affiliations, see “‘\textit{La Liberté guidant le peuple}’ de Delacroix devant son premier public,” \textit{Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales} 28 (June 1979): 12-13, 15-22. See also, Jobert, 130; Johnson, \textit{The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix}, I:148; and Hélène Toussaint, “\textit{La Liberté guidant le peuple}” de Delacroix: exposition présentée au Musée du Louvre du 5 novembre 1982 au 7 février 1983, réalisée par la Réunion des musées nationaux (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1982), 49.\textsuperscript{336} See Hadjinicolaou, 22-25; and Boime, 253-263. On the development of the figure of Marianne to Liberty from the Revolution to the July Monarchy and a comparison of them as they appeared in various images, see Maurice Agulhon, “Liberty, the Republic and the goddess. 1789-1830” and “The Goddess and the Citizen-king. 1830-1848,” in \textit{Marianne into Combat: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789-1880}, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 11-61. For a discussion of Marianne and her symbolism during the Republic, see Lynn Hunt, \textit{Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 93-94.
states that he encountered Delacroix on the pont d’Arcole on July 27; however, he probably meant the twenty-eighth based upon his description of the events.\textsuperscript{337} Dumas emphasized Delacroix’s initial fear of the fighting which soon turned into enthusiasm over the sense of national pride and patriotic fervor. He noted:

\begin{quote}
Delacroix was terribly afraid, I tell you, and showed his fear in most energetic fashion. But when Delacroix saw the tricolor flag floating above Notre Dame, when he recognized—he, a fanatic of the Empire, whose father was prefect under the Empire of the two most important cities in France, whose brother, having been promoted to general, was wounded on five or six battlefields, whose second brother had been killed at Friedland—when he recognized, we have said—he, the fanatic of the Empire—the standard of the Empire, ah! ma foi, he did not restrain himself! Enthusiasm replaced fear, and he glorified the people, who at first had frightened him.\textsuperscript{338}
\end{quote}

Johnson asserts that “Dumas’ account has been viewed with skepticism,” possibly due to his overly romanticized descriptions of the event and the reference to the wrong date. His account, nonetheless, gives a sense of the fear of death experienced on that day, in particular, by Delacroix who allegedly witnessed the events and the civilian fighters.\textsuperscript{339}

Delacroix underscores his supposed first-hand impression by figuratively placing himself in the painting alongside the fighters. On the far right end of the barricade the artist painted his signature \textit{Eug. De la Croix 1830} on two individual pieces of the timber that thrust up and above the pile. The two projecting timbers are situated on the same

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\textsuperscript{337} Johnson, \textit{The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix}, I:146. Boime and Jobert point out that Dumas must have meant July 28 based upon his description of the events. See Boime, 241; and Jobert, 130.
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\textsuperscript{338} Alexandre Dumas, “Causerie sur Eugène Delacroix et ses œuvres,” January 7, 1865, \textit{La Presse}, 3, translated and quoted in Jobert, 130. “Delacroix, je vous en réponds, avait grand peur, et me témoigna sa peur de la façon la plus énergique. Mais quand Delacroix eut vu flotter sur Notre-Dame le drapeau aux trois couleurs; quand il reconnut, lui fanatique de l’Empire, lui dont le père sous l’Empire avait été préfet des deux villes les plus importantes de France; dont le frère, parvenu au grade de général, avait été blessé sur cinq ou six champs de bataille, dont le second frère avait été tué à Friedland; quand il reconnaît, avons-nous dit, lui, fanatique de l’Empire, l’étendard de l’Empire, ah! ma foi, il n’y tint plus, l’enthousiasme prit la place de la peur, et il glorifia ce peuple, qui d’abord l’avait effrayé.”
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{339} Johnson, \textit{The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix}, I:146.
\end{flushright}
horizontal plane as the troops depicted on the other side of the figure of Liberty. In a sense, Delacroix has used his signature on the barricade as a substitute for himself; he, too, is ready to sacrifice his life for liberty and France. Although he did not actually participate in the Revolution, he had devised a way to make amends for his absence on the barricades. In a letter written to his brother Charles in October 1830, he sentimentally and maybe regretfully lamented, “if I have not fought for the country, at least I will paint her.” Indeed, Delacroix did paint his country and included his name as a participant. His signature placed next to the heroes of the Revolution has endured, forever reminding the viewers of this painting that symbolically Eugène Delacroix was a hero and fought for France.

Delacroix’s personal point of view is also experienced by the spectator who stands in the direction of the oncoming fighters; he senses the patriotic excitement of the moment, the fear of death felt by the figures as they run toward their volatile enemy, and the uncertainty of their unknown future as alive or dead. In the scene, the fighters are poised to cross over the threshold of bodies who occupy a borderland that separates the living from their potential or imminent death. This can be seen as a distinctive area or “no-man’s-land,” according to Boime, where three possibly dead soldiers lie between the

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340 Boime also remarked on Delacroix’s signature on the barricade but he suggested it was the artist’s way to “encode himself symbolically into the fray on the side of the victors and beyond harm’s way. By also showing the insurgents charging in the direction of the spectator, the artist could express the unconscious need to fight back his fears and overcome personal doubts about his courage.” Boime, 242. I, however, see Delacroix’s signature on the barricade as a gesture that metaphorically placed him in harm’s way and allowed him to face a possible heroic death.

341 Delacroix to Charles Delacroix, 12 October 1830, Selected Letters, 162. It cannot be without reason and purpose that he confessed this sentiment to his veteran brother who would have appreciated and respected Delacroix’s intention. Sometime during that autumn Delacroix joined the National Guard, maybe as another way to atone for not fighting alongside the people or he may have been enrapured by the renewed sense of patriotism felt in the wake of les Trois Glorieuses. However, in a letter from 1831 he expressed his lack of enthusiasm about the National Guard as he confessed, “I have got myself involved, like an idiot;” admitting he realized that participation in the armed services was not for him. Within a few months his heroic venture was defeated. Delacroix to Félix Guillemandet, 15 February 1831, Selected Letters, 166.
insurgents and their enemy.\textsuperscript{342} The civilian troops must pass over these figures in order to attain victory; however, the fighters’ uncertain future is foreshadowed by the ambiguous bodies occupying this liminal space.

Delacroix made little effort to convince viewers that the bodies in the foreground were either truly dead or merely dying (and somewhat alive). Their wounds, a usual sign of death in battles, are barely noticeable: the Frenchman has a wound hidden under his shirt on his right torso while a drip of blood falls from his right ear and a faint swirl of blood is seen around his head; a subtle leak of blood seeps under the shirt of the Swiss guard; and blood is smeared across the forehead and possibly pools on the ground under the cavalryman’s face seen on the far right. Delacroix has seemingly avoided the obvious signs of putrefaction, such as gangrene, bloating, or decomposing skin that would have confirmed their deaths yet these signs would not have been apparent if the soldiers were killed on the same day. And although the three corpses lack the green tone of putrefaction, they are only slightly paler and less rosy than the figures who charge over the barricades. This suggests Delacroix may have purposely tried to defy any true identification of the soldiers as alive, dying, or dead; their appearances neither confirm nor deny any certain state.

Some Salon critics were struck by the unusual appearance and ambiguity of the prostrate bodies. The Frenchman’s body was a complete failure according to a critic from \textit{L’Avenir}, who complained to Delacroix, “this corpse, who does not even have the color of a corpse! Monsieur, the dead man has bones, a patella, a tibia, and you forgot all

\textsuperscript{342} Boime, 241.
these things!” However, Charles Farcy, a critic from the *Journal des artistes*, interpreted the same body much differently, and criticized Delacroix for his lack of knowledge of corpses. He suggested, “if one judges by the lividity of the skin” this corpse was “killed eight days before the fight began.” Likewise, another reviewer argued that despite the “pale and epidemic color” on the soldiers, “these men there never succumbed under gunshot.” A critic in *Le National* offered this explanation for Delacroix’s inability to correctly portray a corpse:

> He has also forgotten that the expired male corpses who have just been struck by gunfire do not resemble the sick who have succumbed in the hospital after a long sickness. He looked for the most livid, the most decomposed, the most hideous corpses in the amphitheatre, while in reality, the body of a man who died suddenly hardly differed from that of a sleeping man.

It is curious he believed that Delacroix’s bodies, who most likely died by gunshots, should have appeared like “a sleeping man,” as sleep was one of the most fallible signs of apparent death. This same critic finalized his disapproval by remarking that “the fighters, though hideous” are “of the same color as the corpses.” He not only claimed that the soldiers lying in the foreground seem more like victims from a morgue instead of victims of war, he also argued that the civilian troops on the barricades appeared with the same morbidly-diseased color! At the Salon, then, opinions clearly varied as to the actual state

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344. F. [Charles Farcy], “Nouvelles des arts,” *Journal des artistes*, May 8, 1831, 347. “Sur le devant, un mort, tué huit jours avant que le combat fût commencé, si l’on en juge par la lividité des chairs.”


347. Ibid., n.p. “Les combattants, quoiqu’aussi hideux et de la même couleur que les cadavres des tués.”
of death of these bodies, as if they were victims witnessed at the morgue or victims of
gunshots.

Their indeterminate status as alive and dead suggests that the supposedly dead
bodies in the foreground are portrayed as existing in the uncertain moments between life
and death. Because of their placement in the path of the revolutionaries who charge
forward, the prostrate soldiers can be read as symbolic of the transitional phase that exists
after life but before death. Thus, as the revolutionary fighters charge forward and across
these soldiers lying within this borderland space, the improvised troops are about to
endure a *status viatoris*; they will transition from a state of life through an uncertain
period and into an unknown state—either life or death, albeit a heroic death.

Delacroix’s representation of a *status viatoris* in *Liberty Leading the People*
resulted from his earlier depictions of this uncertain and temporal progression from life to
death. His construction of this scene of heroic death involved bodies with the ambiguous
characteristics of *la mort apparente*, gestures and actions that signified a liveliness but
also a commitment to sacrifice, and a dynamic and somewhat confusing composition that
emphasized a movement from life to a potential death, all of which were products of
techniques witnessed in his prior paintings. However, in *Liberty Leading the People*, the
mystery and anxiety involved in the state of dying—that is the stage one goes through
from life to death—was not as imbued with as much sadness, doubt, or malaise as it had
been in his previous paintings from the Restoration. It is here, rather, hopeful and
optimistic. In 1830 the *status viatoris* and the portrayal of heroic death became more
reflective of a willingness to die despite the fear and uncertainty of an unknown future.
To quote Musset, “and if one must die, what did it matter? Death itself was so beautiful,
Delacroix undoubtedly sensed this kind of excitement and sacrifice in 1830. In his final monumental painting to mark the end of the Restoration, Delacroix has thus depicted figures in a transition from life to death that is less indicative of the uncertainty of the period than of a patriotic desire for heroic death.

The paintings discussed in this chapter are not solely about contemporary ideas on dying and death. However, they are unarguably concerned with the artist’s pursuit of academic approval at the Salon in Dante and Virgil in Hell; the portrayal of a contemporary event and the horrors of Greek Wars in Massacres at Chios; the representation of an overtly-sexualized exotic woman for political propaganda in Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi; the exuberance of an Orientalist fantasy in Death of Sardanapalus; the success of and heroism displayed during the July Revolution in Liberty Leading the People. And yet, in a letter to a friend written in 1846, Delacroix expressed a sense of uncertainty that recalled the mysterious and invariable progression, similar to that of a status viatoris, which I suggest he had portrayed in these five monumental paintings from the Restoration. He lamented,

One must take uncertainty as one’s basis. Consequently, owing to the brevity of the moments in which we can enjoy rest or a certain degree of happiness, we live in a constant apprehension of what lies in store and of the burden we shall soon have to assume once more.  

The paintings, then, were also concerned with this sense of the mal du siècle—a fear of the unknown, a dissatisfaction with the present, a restlessness—in tandem with a longing for the heroism associated with Napoleon. The combined influence on Delacroix’s

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348 Musset, 3.
349 Delacroix to Pierret, 19 August 1846, Selected Letters, 270.
images of the cultural disease known as the *mal du siècle*, contemporary medical science, and even changes in the governing body have yielded new ways to appreciate and understand his work. In particular, this effect is witnessed in his scenes of heroic death wherein the figures, often shown with the ambiguous characteristics of the living and the dead, are represented in an uncertain stage—somewhere between life and death as they endure within a *status viatoris*. 
Chapter 4

“A superb city of the dead placed between the ‘borders of two worlds’”: Prints of Père Lachaise Cemetery (1815-1830)

The legendary Père Lachaise, one of four proposed cemeteries created for new burials outside of the city walls, opened in 1804 on the east side of Paris. This immense cemetery located on the grounds of Mont-Louis, formerly owned by the confessor of Louis XIV, Père de la Chaise, became the first landscaped garden cemetery. The designer, Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart, appropriated a former garden replete with hills, groves, meandering paths, and a plethora of vegetation that adhered to eighteenth-century conceptions of cemeteries as *champs de repos* and pastoral places where the dead endure an eternal sleep. However, from its beginning, Père Lachaise was contrarily conceived of and represented as a place of life; Parisians would enjoy fresh air and peaceful walks amidst nature in the cemetery while commemorating the dead and meditating upon the sweet melancholy of death.

This final chapter focuses on the dichotomous existence of both life and death (or the living and the dead) through the representation of Père Lachaise in prints included in *vues pittoresques* and travel guidebooks as a place where life (or the living) and death (or the dead) meet. Centered on the cemetery as a site of touristic interest, these guidebooks, some of which focused exclusively on Père Lachaise, offered walking tours, descriptions of the tombs of famous people, and landscape images. More specifically, their imagery featured pleasurable scenes of

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people walking amongst graves and admiring funerary monuments. These prints, moreover, attested to how a space meant for the dead became a place to experience life. In other words, visitors experienced life in a cemetery that appeared more like an urban space meant for them. Their portrayal in cemetery prints reflected a variation on the idea of a *status viatoris* wherein the living are depicted in a setting representative of the static period where life is separated from death. The prints reveal this uncertain period by the juxtaposition of the living and the dead. It also appears in the contradiction of associations of life—Paris, window-shopping, commodities, and urban architecture—with those of death, such as the cemetery or funerary monuments.

However, the images also blur these same oppositions; hence the suggestion that images of Père Lachaise may be described more accurately as portraying the ambiguous place where life meets death.

Development and history of landscaped garden cemeteries

The representation of Père Lachaise, whose rich development occurred simultaneously with Delacroix and Géricault’s creation of ambiguously dying or dead figures, also shares with these artists’ imagery a legacy of eighteenth-century medico-scientific inquiries into the physiology of the body and causes of death. However, the doctors’ and scientists’ reasons for investigation are slightly different. It is commonly accepted that the scientific research which influenced changes in burial practices, and which led to the garden cemetery outside of the city,

was concerned with miasmas and mephitic gases from corpses. As early as 1711, complaints regarding the infectious air and the foul odors emitted from overcrowded graveyards such as the Cimetière des Innocents in the center of Paris were documented and continued throughout the century.\(^{352}\) The noxious fumes and unpleasant odors were thought to be caused by partially decomposed bodies, most likely the result of overcrowding shallow graves and soil too poor to accommodate decomposition. The problem with these morbid fumes was exacerbated by contemporary thought that “disease was spread by the corruption of the air.”\(^{353}\) This may have explained the unfortunate deaths of several gravediggers and bystanders who were exposed to putrefied bodies during burials and exhumations across France.\(^{354}\) Etlin has noted how the visibility and scent of these unappealing corpses in small urban graveyards led to a “growing unease and trepidation about death and the dead.”\(^{355}\) It was notably both the abject corpses and fear of premature burial that inspired contemporary medical research on the causes for death and the physiological progression of dying as seen in the work of Sue, Bichat, Durande, among others.\(^{356}\) Their work or even the studies from mid-century by Winsløw, Louis, Pineau, and Janin have not been cited in connection with the changes in burial practices and the movement to eradicate burials within churches and the city limits.\(^{357}\) I suggest their discoveries regarding

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\(^{352}\) Etlin, 13.

\(^{353}\) Ibid., 16. The French scientist Antoine-Laurent de Lavoisier studied the chemical composition of hydrogen, oxygen, and air in the 1770s to explain the effects of airborne toxins within the city and other specific areas such as in churches or graveyards.

\(^{354}\) In 1744, numerous people became asphyxiated by fumes released from a sepulchral vault during a funeral in Montpellier. A similar event occurred in Saulieu (Burgundy) in 1773. After a grave was reopened for a new burial, 27 people died and an astounding 140 people fell ill. The most well-known case took place in Paris at the infamous Cimetière des Innocents when several people became sick after mephitic gas was leaked from a communal grave that was filled with 1600 corpses and the fumes spread under the Rue de la Lingerie. Ibid., 16, 31, and 33.

\(^{355}\) Ibid., 16.

\(^{356}\) See Sue, Opinion du citoyen Sue, professeur de médecine et de botanique, sur le supplice de la guillotine; Sue, Recherches physiologiques et expérimentales sur la vitalité; Bichat, Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort; and Durande, Mémoire sur l’usage d’ensevelir les morts.

\(^{357}\) See Winsløw, Quaestio medico-chirurgica...An mortis incertae signa minus incerta a chirurgicis, quam ab alis experimentis?; Louis, Lettres sur la certitude des signes de la mort; Pineau, Mémoire sur le danger des inhumations
decomposition, putrefaction, and the actual moment of death, in tandem with the unhygienic 
effects of polluted air from rotten corpses, helped alleviate many concerns and offer answers for 
how, where, and when a corpse should be buried. In effect, as Etlin suggested, “over the course 
of sixty years, the image of what a cemetery should be had undergone several radical 
transformations,” which remarkably paralleled a similar change in the perception of the living, 
dying, and dead body because of advancements in medico-scientific research. As this chapter 
reasons, it was arguably not only the dire state of inner-city graveyards and Enlightenment 
interests in public hygiene that led to the development of large-scale garden landscaped 
cemeteries; studies on the dying body, and in particular, the corpse, equally contributed to this 
spectacular change. A review of this history and the various influences that led to the 
development of Père Lachaise as the first garden cemetery will allow for a clear understanding of 
the appearance and the portrayal of Père Lachaise in prints from the Restoration.

Motivated by the numerous complaints regarding odorous burial grounds and recent 
medical studies concerned with the dying body, the French government initiated several reforms 
to improve cemeteries. One of the most effective was the Decree of 1776. This law deemed 
small, inner-city graveyards unhealthful, forced them to close, and stipulated that new cemeteries 
be built outside the city limits. The five main neighborhood graveyards in Paris were closed 
within a few years, beginning with Saints-Innocents in 1780, Saint-Roch, Saint-Eustache, and 
Saint-Sulpice in 1781, and Saint-Louis in 1782. In 1785, as a way to obliterate all remaining 
evidence of decomposition in the city, bones from the Cimetière des Innocents, among other 
closed cemeteries, were relocated to the new catacombs which were situated outside of the

 précipitées, et sur la nécessité d’un règlement, pour mettre les citoyens à l’abri du malheur d’être enterrés vivans; 
and Janin, Réflexions sur le triste sort de personnes, qui sous une apparence de mort, ont été enterrées vivantes.
358 Etlin, 300.
359 Burton, 130.
Barrière d’Enfer on the south end of Paris. Richard Burton suggested that these changes brought about a “disaggregation of the living from the dead” that “revolutionized almost overnight the ancestral relationship between the living and the dead, who since time immemorial had, so to speak, cohabited in the city’s center.” As Ariès has argued, these closures and the removal of bodily remains to the catacombs were symptomatic of the modern phenomenon wherein death is removed from the familial environment. Custom walls constructed around the perimeter of Paris between 1784 and 1790 for the imposition of taxes only exaggerated the new laws mandating separate spaces for the living and the dead.

After a long period of delay during the Revolutionary period, attention once again turned to the state of cemeteries that had been found unacceptable according to the new health or moral standards of burial. In 1799, the Institut National des Sciences et des Arts held a competition for the grand prix in architecture on the theme of “an Elysium or public cemetery.” Two years later, with no design approved, Interior Minister Lucien Bonaparte announced another contest devoted to new ideas on funeral ceremonies and burial regulations. One proposal, submitted by Joseph Girard, focused on the garden style of cemeteries, a type previously mentioned in a 1794 report, read by Jean-Baptiste Avril, which suggested Champ de Repos or Field of Rest for new cemeteries. Girard reintroduced the popular and widely-held vision of the landscaped garden as a place where

there will be paths where melancholy will stroll lost in
daydreams: they will be shaded by cypress trees, poplars
with trembling leaves, and weeping willows [...] Streams

361 Burton, 130.
362 See Ariès, “Thy Death,” in Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present, 55-83; and The Hour of Our Death, 473-531.
363 Burton, 130.
364 McManners, 363; and Ariès, The Hour of Our Death, 506.
365 Etlin, 238-39; and Ragon, The Space of Death, 207.
Although these ideas were prevalent at the turn of the nineteenth century, they were neither new nor original to the burial reformists between 1794 and 1801. Tombs amidst nature had been seen in France during the eighteenth century, but for the most part these were false tombs not meant for the interment of bodies and decorative ruins staged in private gardens and parks. Collectively, these artificial constructions, as well as the proposed cemetery designs, were inspired by the rejuvenation of pastoral literature in the eighteenth century.

Contemporary pastoral poetry grew from Virgil’s and Theocritus’ visions of Arcadia with its pleasurable sensibilities of nature and of the country. This idealized land was seen “as an ideal realm of perfect bliss and beauty, a dream incarnate of ineffable happiness, surrounded nevertheless with a halo of ‘sweetly’ sad ‘melancholy,’” a place well-suited for the eternal sleep of death. Nicolas Poussin painted this place in *Et in Arcadia Ego* (1637-38 or 1655, Musée du Louvre, Paris) where shepherds are portrayed contemplating death at a tomb located in the rural countryside. Poussin’s painting has been seen by Margaret Fields Denton as the model for the landscaped garden cemeteries, such as Père Lachaise. She cites references to the painting in an essay from the 1801 competition by Gauthier-Lachapelle, who compared the scene to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s tomb at Ermenonville and remarked on the positive moral benefits of burials.

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in nature. Although Poussin’s picture provides an obvious example of a satisfying mixture of death and nature as a place for mourning, this was certainly not the only archetype of the theme.

An Arcadian sensibility also appeared in English poems and stories that waxed romantic on nature and the death of man and heralded the rational Enlightenment mind’s defeat by the somber muse of melancholy. The trend of dechristianization, which accompanied the secularization of death and the afterlife promoted by the Enlightenment, encouraged poets to dwell on the earthly life and death in the tomb instead of the soul’s existence in Heaven. Thomas Gray’s *Elegy in a Country Graveyard* (1753) and Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1760) popularized the revelry of dark and somber moods that appealed to the sensibilities of aristocratic and educated readers, especially those who had the leisure time to contemplate death or ephemeral life at a tomb. James Hervey’s *Meditations among the Tombs* (1746) similarly addressed the sentimental appeal and sublime attraction of tombs, ruins, and nature that gave rise to the cult of melancholy that defined the period. However, it was Salomon Gessner who romanticized the visit to the graveyard, to a loved one’s tomb, in *Idyllen* (c.1756). His stories, set in the countryside far from the urban world of reason and religious doctrine, celebrated the pastoral landscape of nature. Like Virgil’s Arcadia, this was a place where one could freely experience the moral and pious effects of a tomb and the melancholic emotions associated with it.

Inspired by Gessner, Jean-Jacques Rousseau championed nature as the epitome of godliness and a symbol of freedom for man. His philosophies were exemplified ideally by his

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369 Excerpts from Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* were first published in France in 1760 by L’Abbé Arnaud, *Journal étranger*… (Paris: n.p., février 1762); the text in its entirety was published as Edward Young, *Les Nuits d’Young*, trans. Le Tourneur (Paris: Lejay, 1769).
370 *Idyllen* was first translated into French in 1762. *Idylles et Poèmes champêtres de M. Gessner*, trans. Michel Huber (Lyon: Jean-Marie Bruyset, 1762).
burial on the Île des Peupliers at Ermenonville where he spent his final days in 1778. Rousseau’s tomb was set amidst a lake, on a small island, and surrounded by a forest on property owned by the Marquis René-Louis de Girardin. Paradoxically, the area around the tomb of the great proponent and lover of nature was artificially arranged with stones and bushes taken from elsewhere and aesthetically reconfigured to appear natural. Undeterred by the makeshift environment, Rousseau’s admirers immediately began to visit his tomb to pay their respects and mourn the philosopher. Etlin noted how the purposeful design of Ermenonville created “a landscape of illusion to transport the viewer into an Arcadian world. When death was encountered it appeared in a peaceful setting fraught with sweet melancholy and nostalgia.”

Other material tributes to beloved figures such as a memorial to Virgil, a monument to Petrarch’s Laura, and a Temple of Modern Philosophy, were all built at Ermenonville and added to the overall appeal of this constructed Arcadian world. The Île des Peupliers and Ermenonville quickly achieved status as an attraction. Travel guidebooks with prints of landscape views published in 1788 by the Marquis de Girardin and his son, Stanislas, described walking tours through the park to highlight the most scenic vistas as well as numerous memorials. During the Restoration, cemeteries in Paris would also attain a popularity that warranted specialized guidebooks. However, the status of cemeteries as fashionable tourist sites would eventually surpass these earlier attractions. Unfortunately, due to mistreatment by crowds of visitors, the park at Ermenonville was closed to the public in 1788, and in 1794 Rousseau’s ashes were moved to the Panthéon.

Like the strategically-arranged pieces of nature at Rousseau’s tomb, fabricated ruins also became fashionable in other public and private gardens and parks during the late eighteenth

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371 Etlin, 209.
century in France, where fallen emblems of the distant past contributed to a recognition of the transitory essence of time and life. These designs were first witnessed in English gardens, most popularly in the Elysian Fields at Stowe, Buckinghamshire, dating from the early 1730s. Obelisks, statues, busts of famous writers and philosophers, false tombs, and ruins were incorporated to evoke the aura of an ancient landscape whose scenery was Virgilian. In the Elysian Fields, nature offered respite from urban life and became a place for contemplation and inspiration. In France, public and private gardens and parks, in addition to Ermenonville, borrowed the style and design of Stowe. The Parc Monceau, created for the Duc d’Orléans in 1778 in the northwest corner of Paris, was the most popular of these eighteenth-century parks in or around the city.\textsuperscript{373} Grottoes, partial colonnades, artificial tombs, and broken columns were situated across the hilly landscape to mimic actual ancient ruins and inspire melancholic emotions. The Parc Monceau became a fashionable destination among the aristocracy and those who could afford leisure time. A privileged escape to nature and into the mysterious world of thoughts and somber emotions were some of the tenets of this formative cult of melancholy. Eventually these ideas metamorphosized into the cult of tombs of which the Parc Monceau and Elysian Fields, adorned with false tombs and memorials in nature, became two of the stylistic models for cemeteries in the nineteenth century.

**Development of Père Lachaise**

In 1801 Nicolas-Thérèse-Benoît Frochot, the new Prefect of the Department of the Seine, suggested converting the already-developed pastoral setting of the Parc Monceau, which by then was bordered by a cemetery, into a larger burial ground. According to Frochot, the Parc Monceau “offers a delectable Elysium where death would hold sway only in the memory of the

living…” Although unsuccessful with this first endeavor, Frochot did acquire Mont-Louis in 1803 which became the Cimetière de l’Est (Decree of 22 Floréal, Year XII, 12 May 1804), more popularly known as Père Lachaise. Located outside the Barrière d’Aulnay, the cemetery was required by law to maintain a minimum distance of thirty-five to forty meters from the city walls or any residential building (Figure 4.1). This measure, of course, was taken to protect the health of those nearest to the cemetery from the miasmas that were thought to emanate from dead bodies and their graves. However, the strict separation of the cemetery from the city—by walls surrounding it entirely—also adhered to Enlightenment ideals. Etlin suggests that this was based upon the idea that for the French, “one could not fathom the ultimate mysteries of life and death, but one could establish a degree of certainty and control by physically distancing death and by bounding it within closed walls.”

Mont-Louis included hills with exposure to north winds suitable for lofting away deathly fumes, and was also ideal for the picturesque and pastoral design that would identify the space as different from the city. An early design of Père Lachaise from 1812 by Brongniart illustrates the influence of the English garden style and popular pastoral poetry that joined death and nature in an idyllic picturesque landscape (Figure 4.2). The map shows circular carriage paths and small footpaths curving and winding on hills and around clusters of trees, and an occasional straight boulevard with outlines of shrubs, much like gardens of the eighteenth century (Compare with plan of the Elysian Fields, Stowe, Buckinghamshire Figure 4.3.). Brongniart’s design even included benches interspersed throughout the cemetery to encourage reflection and long visits.

374 Ibid., 227.
376 Etlin, 26.
Despite the curvilinear and pastoral appearance of Père Lachaise, the cemetery was structurally divided into three separate sections for particular types of burials: fosses communes (common graves), temporaries, and concession à perpetuité. According to the law of 23 Prairial, a citizen was entitled to an individual grave measuring one and one-half to two meters deep and separated from its neighbor by twenty to thirty centimeters on each side and thirty to fifty centimeters at the head and feet, but that did not necessarily mean a permanent grave. Fosses communes, or common graves, were individual plots, dug up every five to ten years, and the remains of which were then relocated to either a mass burial or the catacombs. These burials were confined to the plains located on the lower grounds around the periphery of the cemetery. A superior, but low-cost burial was the temporaire, purchased for five years and available for renewal. The temporaire burials were located in more visually accessible areas along the main alleys and pathways. The only permanent type of burial available at Père Lachaise, and the most expensive, was the concession à perpetuité, which was typically purchased by wealthy families or with endowments left by famous people. Identified by their grandiose size, these monumental tombs were allotted the majority of the picturesque landscape across the hills and throughout the center of Père Lachaise.

During the early years of the Restoration, the cemetery underwent a renovation that brought it closer to its current appearance. This same period witnessed an increased number of and new editions of guidebooks for Père Lachaise. For example, Marchant de Beaumont’s Le Nouveau conducteur de l’étranger à Paris series, which had a large section dedicated to Père Lachaise, began in 1811 and published its 16th edition by 1833. The landscape of the

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377 Kselman, 170.
379 See also, C. P. Arnaud, Cimetières du P. La Chaise. Recueil de 18 portes et grilles...les plus remarquables...de ce vaste et pittoresque cimetière dessinées par C.P. Arnaud (Paris: Arnaud, 1823); Arnaud, Recueil de tombeaux des
The cemetery was significantly changed by the construction of numerous tombs, especially concessions à perpetuité. In 1817 several famous people, such as Molière, Pierre Abélard and Héloïse d’Argenteuil, and Jean de la Fontaine were ordered by the directors of the cemetery to be removed from their original burial places and laid to rest in Père Lachaise in grandiose tombs with the intention to draw more visitors and future residents-in-perpetuity to the cemetery. Meanwhile contemporary citizens of political notoriety, such as Napoleonic veterans Maréchal Michel Ney and André Masséna, also were buried in monumental tombs. *The History of Paris*, published in 1832, estimated that by this time almost one hundred thousand people had been buried in Père Lachaise and close to sixteen thousand monuments had been erected.\(^{380}\) Not everyone appreciated the expansion, with its attendant loss of the rural arcadian cemetery dotted with small tombs. A guidebook writer, known as G. G., referred to Père Lachaise in 1826 as an “anthill of vulgar tombs” in comparison to the way it looked in 1818. He went on to complain that its present appearance “seems to me incompatible with the sentiments of sweet melancholy that one has come to uphold in this place.”\(^{381}\) Essentially, G.G. was observing that the cemetery had become a crowded space more similar to the city than a garden graveyard. Similarly, I suggest this urban development of Père Lachaise coincided with Paris itself shedding its medieval appearance and becoming a more modern, urbanized city.

**Paris: urbanization and tourism**

This modernization of Paris typically is associated with Haussmannization at mid-century, although some historians, such as Nicholas Green, cite its beginning in the architectural

\(^{380}\) *The History of Paris*, 3: 359.

\(^{381}\) G.G. Promenade sérieuse au cimetière du Père La Chaise, ou du Mont-Louis, près de Paris, 38. “une fourmilière de tombes vulgaires” “me parut incompatible avec les sentiments d’une douce melancholie que l’on voudrait entretenir dans ces lieux.”
programs of the 1820s. At this time, rapid population growth necessitated the construction of multi-storied domestic buildings within Paris. Several were located in working-class quarters such as the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, where the spike in population was most noticeable.

Elsewhere, residential structures were built to accommodate the aristocracy and bourgeoisie who desired to move to more prominent neighborhoods. These buildings replaced the medieval houses that formerly crowded the inner city. By eradicating the claustrophobic labyrinth of buildings, the city became a more enjoyable site which, Green argues, eventually led to new leisure activities, pleasure parks, and a consumer-oriented society.\textsuperscript{382} For instance, the urban promenade did not originate with Haussmann, but rather developed during the early years of the Restoration in the construction of new paved boulevards lined with sidewalks that replaced the small medieval streets. This resulted in an increased area of pavement from 267 to 6145 square meters in the city between 1822 and 1827, perhaps encouraging citizens to enjoy leisurely strolls throughout their Paris.\textsuperscript{383}

Another aspect of the urbanization of Paris was the development of consumer-oriented structures. At least twenty arcades and \textit{passages couverts} were built between 1822 and 1828 to complement and offer an option to the outdoor shopping markets, such as Les Halles.\textsuperscript{384} Strategically located in upper-class areas near popular cafés, theatres, and the large boulevards, they became small epicenters of culture. These arcaded loggias were noted for their fancy décor of mosaic floors, sculpted moldings and columns, and iron and glass architecture but they were also known as a place to purchase luxury goods, aesthetically arranged in display cases behind the large glass storefront windows that were often flanked by decorative mirrors to reflect light

\textsuperscript{382} Nicholas Green, \textit{The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France} (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 25.

\textsuperscript{383} Ibid., 17.

as well as the enchanted consumer along the hallways. A print of the Galerie d’Orléans, built from 1828 to 1830 to replace the seedy eighteenth-century Galeries de Bois located at the Palais Royal, is an exemplary illustration of the activities and elegant appearance of these new shopping centers (Figure 4.4).385 The composition emphasizes the long arched hallway of the arcade where some fashionable shoppers are seen casually walking through the space on their way to purchase merchandise while others linger and talk with each other as they seemingly enjoy their new classy surroundings. Considered by Walter Benjamin as emblematic of modernity, these covered arcades offered a safe environment, as witnessed in this image, free from muddy streets and sidewalks, as well as inclement weather.386 Here the bourgeoisie could stroll and shop in richly-decorated and grandly-covered spaces. In other words, inside the arcades they could easily participate in the modern spectacles of cruising and consumerism.

These physical changes across the urban landscape, in addition to several other cultural factors, brought about a new self-consciousness about Paris as an object of touristic interest. Beginning in the post-Revolutionary era, a growing segment of the bourgeoisie and middle class began to identify themselves with a metropolitan society that was based on urban places, activities, and travel. The vues pittoresques and travel guidebooks that illustrated European countries and their famous historical sites as well as exotic locales like the Levant, Algeria, and the Americas attest to the popularity of travel in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. An increasing number of such books in the Restoration period began to focus on France, and even more specifically on Paris, and were directed at residents and visitors alike. These books described the city’s popular cafés, theatres, streets, arcades, parks, and hotels in

great detail; they not only promoted the highlights of the city but also objectified these places as products to be consumed. As Green has shown, the success of the books and the included landscape picturesque prints hinged on the popular interest in exploring France which, in his opinion, “was less any notion of nature as physical and spiritual refreshment which predominated at that moment than a cluster of ideological resonances around the nation precipitated by the fall of the Empire and national crisis.”

There is no doubt that France, like many other European countries, was promoted in these books and prints as an object of national pride with the intention to regain and reaffirm a sense of Frenchness.

**Tourism in places of death: the catacombs, morgue, and cemetery**

Within this larger touristic interest in Paris in the early nineteenth century, sites associated with death, such as the catacombs, the morgue, and the cemetery had a curiously prominent role and has not yet been discussed by scholars. During the Restoration the catacombs had become a fashionable site, particularly for the wealthy; for example, the Emperor of Austria visited the catacombs on the sixteenth of April in 1814. The catacombs’ appeal could be traced to the work of Louis Héricart de Thury, who became the catacombs’ director after the Revolution, and who implemented the rearrangement of the bones in an aesthetically-oriented presentation based on the Roman catacombs. In 1814, Héricart de Thury wrote a book on the history of the Paris catacombs, which also included several illustrations that demonstrated their touristic aspects.

Images entitled *Escalier de hautes et basses communications*, *Vue de la Fontaine, des catacombs hautes dite de la Samaritaine*, and *Vue du Pilier de memento et du*

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387 Green, 100.
sarcophage du Lacrymatoire portrayed men and women strolling arm-in-arm throughout the long maze of hallways and gazing at the intricate design of bones on the walls stacked from floor to ceiling (Figures 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7). Soon thereafter, the catacombs began to appear in illustrated books such as Le nouveau conducteur de l’étranger à Paris from 1819, with its frontispiece that featured a chapel adorned by a small altar and walls comprised of bones (Figure 4.8).\textsuperscript{390} Aside from the catacombs’ purpose as an ossuary, the tombs were used for other functions, including dinner parties.\textsuperscript{391} Their popularity as an attraction and tourist site would have been perpetuated by foreign and French accounts of the catacombs that narrated detailed observations on the aesthetic arrangement of bones, the Latin inscriptions placed above doorways and on altars dedicated to remains from a specific graveyard, and the overall atmosphere of the place.\textsuperscript{392}

The Paris morgue on the Marché-Neuf (which coincidentally opened the same year as Père Lachaise) also became a popular place to visit during this period. The English author and architect, Augustus Pugin, even included an exterior view of the morgue, La Morgue, Quai Notre Dame, July 1, 1829, in his monumental illustrated book on Parisian architecture, Paris and its Environs (Figure 4.9).\textsuperscript{393} Built for the display of corpses, the morgue’s stated purpose was

\textsuperscript{390} Marchant de Beaumont, Le Nouveau conducteur de l’étranger à Paris en 1819... précédé d’un précis sur l’histoire de Paris, d’une instruction aux étrangers sur la manière d’y suivre leurs affaires et d’y vivre convenablement à leur fortune; suivi de la description des environs de Paris, 7\textsuperscript{th} éd. (Paris: J. Moronval, 1819).

\textsuperscript{391} Allegedly these parties were held by the upper-class and the dedicated members of the cult of the tombs. Gatherings are still held in the Paris underground—the catacombs, former and undeveloped sewers, and old train/metro passages—by named and unnamed societies. Underground areas have been found equipped with security cameras, mini restaurants, and a movie theatre. It is believed films have been viewed on regular occasions in parts of the underground as recently as 2004. See Patrick Saletta, A la découverte des souterrains de Paris (Antony: SIDES, 1990); “La Mexicaine de perforation,” http://www.urban-resources.net/la_mexicaine_de_perforation.html; http://troglos.free.fr/; Lauren Johnston, “Paris’ Secret Underworld,” http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/09/27/world/main645876.shtml; Jon Henley, “In a Secret Paris Cavern, the Real Underground Cinema,” http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/sep/08/filmnews.france.

\textsuperscript{392} See Anonymous, Memorandums of a Residence in France in the Winter of 1815-16, 353-375.

identification, not entertainment; nonetheless, the facility became a popular spectacle. A single door entrance welcomed guests from the streets into a large open room that was intended specifically for viewing. In *Tableaux de Paris*, published between 1821 and 1824, Jean-Henri Marlet described its interior arrangement as a place meant to be visited:

> Everything seems to have been thought of in terms of the interior setup of this dismal building. The big high windows perfectly light the marble ramps on which the corpses are placed. Vast closed-off glass windows permit people to examine the corpses without being exposed to their fumes, as many of them are in a decaying state.

And a few years later, Léon Gozlan, author of *Paris, ou Le livre des cent-et-un* from 1831, confirmed its success as a tourist site when he, possibly with an ironic tone, referred to the morgue as “the Luxembourg, the Place Royale of the Cité. One goes there to see the latest fashions, orange trees blooming, chestnut trees that rustle in the autumn winds, in spring, and in winter.”

The morgue was illustrated in the *Journal des anecdotes* with the image *Vue intérieure de la morgue* during the 1820s, and an English print, *People Visiting the Morgue in Paris, Including a Soldier in Full Uniform and a Mother and Her Young Son, May 1, 1816* by Richard Brinsley Peake (Figures 1.6 and 1.7). These prints depict visitors different classes as they view bodies laid out on tables behind large glass windows; some visitors show expressions of horror or fear, while most casually observe the corpses. Presented in such a way, the bodies at the morgue had become akin to the luxury goods on display in the new arcades, in a sense, objects for commodification. Like shoppers in the arcades and *passages* and tourists in the

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394 Vanessa Schwartz discusses the spectacular nature of the morgue; however, she focuses more on the late nineteenth-century reception and images of a new morgue that opened in 1864 and which became the focus of significantly more images, personal accounts, and historical books. Schwartz, “Public Visits to the Morgue: Flânerie in the Service of the State,” *Spectacular Realities*, 47-88.
396 Gozlan, I: 303, quoted in Ibid., 53.
catacombs, I argue the visitors to the morgue activated the space through their movement along outlined passageways and through the leisurely examination of objects (corpses) on display.

I will show how similar experiences occurred at Père Lachaise and were subsequently depicted in the guidebook prints. The picturesque landscape views illustrated how Père Lachaise became something more than a place to dispose of the dead. It was no longer perceived only as a place for quiet contemplation and meditation upon a lost loved one in a purely arcadian garden; instead the cemetery was now a place to promenade and to breathe fresh air. Chabrol, Prefect of the Seine, who agreed with the premise that air and sunlight were associated with good health, made a plea to the government for more outdoor spaces:

The fields and gardens which used to exist within the vast enclosure of the capital are being transformed into streets. Soon we shall have no other well-aired open spaces apart from the public places which have long existed and the squares planted with trees which are being laid out in some new quarters. Thus, what we need to create are other gardens, new promenades. 397

Based upon the images of Père Lachaise included in guidebooks and vues pittoresques, the cemetery was able to offer, to a certain degree, refreshing experiences amidst nature. A description of Père Lachaise included in The History of Paris from 1832 explained: “to render access easy to different points winding paths were formed; a wide paved road was opened to the ancient mansion of Père Lachaise, and with the shrubs and fruit-trees were mingled cypresses and weeping willows.” 398 This description recalls a park replete with greenery and paths meant for strolling; there is remarkably no mention of tombs or the fact that it is a cemetery. Beaumont addressed this same pastoral aspect in the introduction to his guidebook, L’Observateur au cimetièr du Père Lachaise from 1822. He suggested:

No other neighboring site in the capital offers a more picturesque aspect. [...] This superb place has nothing of the somber character of the ancient cemeteries of Paris, where from everywhere the ugly image of destruction and death was presented to hearts of the oppressed. [...] These long and majestic alleys, these sinuous serpentine paths nonchalantly meander in the depths of dales, on the escarpment of hills, on the ground of the plains, between vast carpets of lawn. [...] No putrid smells waft from this beautiful place, [it] is always filled during the summer by the perfume of the most sweet flowers.”

The images included in the travel guidebooks and *vues pittoresques* not only pictured Parisians enjoying their strolls through the garden cemetery or observing graves, but they subtly remarked on the enjoyment of life in a place of death that, in many ways, recalled the urban world. In other words, the cemetery as depicted in the prints could be construed as a borderland space wherein the living and the dead or life and death co-existed. Beaumont astutely observed this notion in 1822 when he wrote, “All were suited to the pleasures of this magnificent garden, even if the funeral monuments, rising up on all sides, didn’t inspire in hearts a genuine sensuous delight in this superb city of the dead placed between the ‘borders of two worlds.’”

This identification of Père Lachaise as a place “between the borders of two worlds” implies the idea of an in-between place or the intersection of life and death. The ways in which this appears can be divided into three categories. The first concerns images where the city is distinctively present in the middle or the background of the prints. A second group features visitors observing tombs in ways that mimic consumers browsing at the shop windows in the arcades and passages. And

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400 Ibid., 4. “Tout convenait au plaisir dans ce jardin magnifique, si les monuments funèbres, s’élevant de toutes parts, n’inspiraient aux cœurs une ‘voluté sérieuse,’ dans une superbe ville des morts placée entre les ‘limites des deux mondes.’”
finally, a few prints present expansive scenes with tombs placed along open alleys and paths that recall the views of boulevards in Paris and emphasize the urban appearance of Père Lachaise. Together these images depict the idea that a place meant for the dead somehow functioned and appeared more like a place meant for the living and reflected aspects associated with life: the city, consumerism, and urban architecture.

The physical relationship between Père Lachaise and Paris

Père Lachaise was connected physically and ideologically to the city despite the intention for the cemetery to maintain a strict separation from the urban world. Five years after Père Lachaise opened, a guidebook, *Voyage religieux*, remarked that its finest feature was the “vast plateau in front of this [mansion] that presents a most magnificent view,” meaning the view of Paris. By 1815 a pocket-sized guidebook equipped with a pull-out map stated: “It is necessary to rest there some time to enjoy the beautiful view.” Even a Scotsman, John Strang, writing an appeal for new garden cemeteries in Scotland in 1831, commented on the beauty of Père Lachaise and specifically its relationship to Paris. He poetically opined:

> Within the extensive and delightfully variegated enclosure alluded to, situated Mont Louis, it is perhaps unnecessary to state, that all the disagreeable sensations which are here coupled with a churchyard, are dispelled by the beauty of the garden, the variety of its walks, by the romantic nature of its situation, and, above all, by the commanding views of Paris and its environs which it affords.

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401 Caillot, *Voyage religieux et sentimental aux quatre cimetières de Paris*, 144. “un vaste plateau devant lequel se présente le coup d’œil le plus magnifique.”

402 Arnaud, *Le Guide du voyageur sentimental au cimetière de Mont-Louis, dit du Père La Chaise*, 25. “Il faut se resposer là quelques instants [sic] pour jouir du beau coup-d’œil.” His statement comes one year after Russian troops settled in Père Lachaise during their siege of Paris. Arnaud’s suggestion to “rest there” and “enjoy the beautiful view” may have been a plea for Parisians to repossess their beloved cemetery and appreciate the formidable physical relationship it shares with the city.

During the Restoration, two artists, Henri Courvoisier and Christophe Civeton, illustrated these observations in their drawings of tombs at Père Lachaise and of Paris. *View of Abélard and Héloïse* by Courvoisier, from 1817, depicts one of the most famous monuments in Père Lachaise (Figure 4.10). In the same year, the remains of Pierre Abélard, a twelfth-century theologian and philosopher, and his wife Héloïse d’Argenteuil were interred in a grandiose Gothic-styled tomb that immediately became and has remained one of the most popular sites at the cemetery. Abélard and Héloïse were the star-crossed lovers whose affair as teacher and student resulted in a secret marriage and a son. They were eventually separated and forced to live in a convent and monastery for the rest of their lives. Letters they had written to each other were discovered in a fifteenth-century manuscript and became legendary missives for romantically-inclined individuals. In the print, their monumental tomb dominates the open foreground which is surrounded on all sides by trees, bushes, and a few other smaller tomb markers. Next to the medieval lovers’ monument stands a couple who gesture toward the tomb, embrace and kiss as if they are inspired by the romantic nature of Abélard and Héloïse’s story. On the far left of the composition, a man with hands placed upon a fence, gazes at a small tomb. An expansive view of Paris lies in the background below the horizon. Although the city is only lightly sketched compared to the foreground, its presence is noticed distinctly by its stark juxtaposition with the profusion of trees, shrubs, and grass seen in the cemetery. Even though the tomb of Abélard and Héloïse is set on a high plain that, in 1817, would have offered a view of the city, the felicitous opening seen in Courvoisier’s print between the tall trees and the steep slope that widens this vista toward Paris was undoubtedly exaggerated to play up the picturesque aspect and entice visitors.
A second print by Courvoisier, *View of Cemetery from Tomb of Delille*, c. 1817, features the tomb of the popular eighteenth-century pastoral poet and translator of Virgil, Jacques Delille (1738-1813) and that of the Franco-Belgian composer André-Modeste Grétry (1741-1813). This print of their tombs along a frequently walked path further accentuates the presence of Paris in images of Père Lachaise (Figure 4.11). This view of the cemetery—following down a long hill flanked by leafy trees, cypresses, blossoming plants, and shrubbery—is portrayed from a high vantage point on a gravel path lined with modest sculptural tombs, including Delille’s on the right and Grétry’s on the left. The path leads to the main entrance to the cemetery behind which is a dense thicket of trees, while beyond the entrance is a vast cityscape of Paris highlighted by the recognizable dome of the Panthéon which was also the burial place of many great men. Again, the grid pattern of the urban streets is lightly sketched, as are the delicate impressions of buildings in which the architectural lines echo the geometric patterns of tombs and the linear paths strewn across Père Lachaise. However, the tonal contrast of the paler city versus the darker trees and tombs scattered throughout the cemetery speaks to an attempt to distinguish the two spaces from one another. Even though the focus of the print is intended to be on Père Lachaise, tombs of its most recent famous inhabitants, and the visitors strolling and gazing at tombs, the city becomes significant within the scene as the viewer’s eye is led down the gravel path and toward Paris extended across the center of the composition. With equal attention given to both areas, city and cemetery contribute equally to the image’s meaning. The city acts a reminder of life while the cemetery forces the visitor to confront death but in a much more pleasant way as opposed to the miserable condition of the inner-city eighteenth-century graveyards.
Toward the end of the Restoration, Civeton drew images for his book *Les Principaux monuments et vues pittoresques de la ville de Paris et de ses environs*.\(^{404}\) Like Courvoisier, Civeton balanced his composition with equal interest placed on the city and the cemetery. In a painted version of his engraved print held at the Bibliothèque Nationale, *View of Père Lachaise and Monument of General Foy*, a dense foreground comprised of tombs and figures in a forest of shrubs and trees sharply contrasts with the blurred and pale cityscape: a southwest view of Paris that realistically situates the dome of the Panthéon, Notre-Dame, and the Tour St. Jacques (Figure 4.12). Maximilien-Sebastien Foy (1775–1825), a general in the Imperial army who fought on the Spanish peninsula and finally at Waterloo, proceeded to have a career during the Restoration in the Chamber of Deputies from 1819 until his death. His monumental tomb on a high precipice offered one of the most favored views of Paris from Père Lachaise. In the image, a prominent reminder of the city—the industrialization that marks the urban world—is highlighted by the long coil of smoke extending upward and across the sky. Despite the overwhelming presence of nature—flora, trees, shrubs, and grass—that differentiates the cemetery grounds from the city, the vertically-oriented tomb monuments mimic the tall buildings and towers in the city that rise above the flattened plane of rooftops, subtly connecting the aesthetic appearance and arrangement of the two places.

Civeton repeated these compositional similarities in his print *View of Greffult Family Tomb* reproduced in the same book (Figure 4.13).\(^{405}\) A grand Gothic single-room tomb with


\(^{405}\) The Greffult family tomb was designed by A.-T. Brongniart, circa 1816. The surname has been misspelled in English translations from its original French name of Greffühle. I have kept the last name as it appears on the print and in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Louis Greffühle (1741-1810) was a banker during the Revolution who supplied émigrés with money and continued while in exile in London after the Revolution. He was even believed to have been Louis XVIII’s banker in London. His son, Jean-Louis Greffühle (1774-1820), continued the family business after his father died. See Beaumont, *Manuel et itinéraire du curieux dans le cimetière du Père Lachaise*, (1828),
towering pointed spires on its four corners rises in the open foreground just right of the center of the composition. Several smaller column tomb markers, a large building, figures, and figure groups surround the area of the Greffult monument. Tall trees and shrubs are interspersed between the tombs and offer a softer, more natural appearance to the rigid array of grave markers. On the far left of the scene extends a limited view of Paris behind which lie two large overlapping hills. In this painted version of Civeton’s print, the city is distinguishable because of its white and gray colors as compared to the sepia tones used in the cemetery. And although the city appears in the distance, seemingly separate from the cemetery, it is, nonetheless, perceived as ambiguously part of the cemetery. A portion of Paris, seen on the far left of the scene, is comprised of a blurry sketch of closely-arranged buildings with various heights and shapes; these echo the compact organization and appearance of the tombs and markers that adorned the cemetery. Thus, in Civeton’s example, one side of the city deceivingly appears to be an extension of the lower plains of Père Lachaise due to the illusion of proximity and similar shapes.

Even Pugin, a foreigner, found the physical relationship between the cemetery and the city to be visually appealing. On the title page of Paris and its Environs he printed a small vignette entitled General View of Paris that offers the reader a hint of the monuments and the views of Paris that are found inside its pages. The image depicts an extended cityscape with domed buildings, Notre-Dame, and smaller structures that are viewed from the elevated ground of the Montmartre cemetery (Figure 4.14). Older than Père Lachaise, this cemetery had been renovated to reopen in 1824, and, like the aforementioned, offered a high vantage from which to see Paris. Although the figures are barely discernible, Pugin included some positioned near the

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tomb markers, and they gaze at the city beyond a wide row of trees. The unique portrayal of a
cemetery, which evoked little or no sense of national or civic pride for a foreigner, suggests that
there was a popular trend to show a physical connection and a vital relationship between the city
and the cemetery in travel guidebooks and *vues pittoresques*.

The city had thus come to represent life and by the 1820s, modernity, which theoretically
stood in opposition to the supposedly pastoral and melancholic “city of the dead” located outside
of the city walls. Balzac exemplified this idea in the closing of his novel *Le Père Goriot* (1835),
set during the Restoration, in order to suggest both a sense of loss and set of aspirations of the
penniless aristocratic character of Eugène de Rastignac. After Rastignac buries Goriot in a
temporaire grave for which he paid with borrowed money, he walks to a high vantage point in
Père Lachaise and from there, vows to conquer the social world of Paris:

> Rastignac walked a few steps to the highest part of the
cemetery, and saw Paris spread out below on both banks
of the winding Seine. […] His gaze fixed almost avidly
upon the space that lay between the column of the Place
Vendôme and the dome of the Invalides; there lay the
splendid world that he had wished to gain.406

Rastignac’s declaration, poignantly expressed in a cemetery and immediately after Goriot’s
pathetic burial, confirms the commanding view on Paris from Père Lachaise that was still
relevant and noteworthy when Balzac wrote his novel in the mid-1830s. Balzac’s use of this
location also establishes or reminds the reader that during the Restoration Père Lachaise was a
place intended to mourn the dead and paradoxically a place to contemplate life and the appeal of
the city.

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Cruising and window shopping in Père Lachaise

Other reminders of Paris and activities associated with life in the prints of the cemetery can be seen in the depictions of figures who observe tombs and monuments. Visitors to the cemetery unwittingly mimicked the shoppers and strollers seen in the arcades and passages who leisurely paced themselves and regarded merchandise on display in the windows. They also, of course, gazed at each other. A print of the Galerie Colbert, one of the oldest and most elegant shopping arcades built during the Restoration, illustrates this activity in its depiction of four couples walking through the rotunda and gazing at objects for sale behind large glass windows (Figure 4.15). The concept of passing through a space, while briefly lingering to observe surrounding products for sale, and even interacting with others, describes the activities of consumers and window-shoppers present in the arcades, yet curiously similar actions appear in the prints of Père Lachaise. I suggest that visitors to the cemetery, who gaze at or offer the tombs as objects of desire, attest to the fact that even death or the afterlife is for sale. With the development of the funeral business and garden cemeteries in the nineteenth century, death or the dead became associated with a material good—one that was affordable even for the middle class. Just like the expensive material goods on sale in the arcades, tombs for the dead were commodities and displayed or presented in such a way to receive the consumer gaze.

Two examples from Marchant de Beaumont’s *Vues pittoresques* from 1821 demonstrate this point. The *Tomb of Abélard and Héloïse* portrays the monumental tomb set behind a lattice-patterned fence on the far right of the scene (Figure 4.16). In front of the enclosure a woman stands next to a man who points toward the tomb, while nearby, a little boy gazes at the monument and holds onto the fence with both hands. The man faces his female companion as he
gestures in the opposite direction; it appears as if he is presenting the monument as an object to be appreciated, perhaps even to be consumed.

View of the Bosquet du dragon, from the same Vues pittoresques depicts a more congested scene filled with trees and bushes engulfing a small open space that contains four modest-sized gravemakers (Figure 4.17). There are two women wearing bonnets and fashionable dresses in the center of the composition; one appears to be walking away from a grave as the other woman seems to lean over a fence to gain a closer look at the same grave. Together they illustrate the ephemeral nature of visiting Père Lachaise, where brief actions of observing tombs, reading inscriptions, and strolling through the cemetery define the experience. They appear happy and full of life as they tour amongst the deceased, seemingly not saddened by thoughts of their own mortality. Yet, the permanency signified by the tombs around them, decidedly in contrast with the bourgeoisie’s ephemeral experience in the cemetery, as in the arcades, heightens the opposition between or the intersection of life and death (or the living and the dead) portrayed in prints of Père Lachaise.

Images from Les Principaux monuments funéraires du Père Lachaise depicted similar behaviors of the two women in the Bosquet du dragon. These vignettes illustrated monumental tombs of mostly famous people; their focus was the tomb and not the landscape of the cemetery or the city. The scenes often included figures to activate and enliven a rather static and lifeless image that shows a structure built to commemorate the dead. In several prints well-dressed visitors and military officers are portrayed passing next to or posed in front of a tomb. Tomb of Abélard and Héloïse features several figures in front of the tomb: some talk with each other while another person points toward it (Figure 4.18). In this case, the object of desire is the

monument that can only be owned by being in its presence. This is implied by the man gesturing toward the tomb, almost posing as if he had created the sculpture, while he describes it or maybe the story of the medieval lovers to his friends; he designates it as his possession. Tomb of Maréchal Gouvion St. Cyr illustrates a similar gestural acknowledgement toward a monument (Figure 4.19). Laurent de Gouvion Saint-Cyr (1764-1830) died the year this print appeared in Les Principaux monuments funéraires du Père Lachaise. This image then must attest to his beloved nature and his respect as an Imperial officer under the Empire and Minister of War and Minister of Navy during the Restoration. However, in the scene, as a couple walks away from the tomb, the man, who is closer to the monument, points back toward the tomb with his right arm, although neither one of the two figures turns to look at it. Here the famous tomb is treated exactly like the display case or products on view in the shop windows, an object to be noticed but not necessarily lingered over for too long.

Other examples focus on tombs of Imperial officers, and these prints often commented on the lingering reverence and admiration of Napoleonic veterans during the Restoration. Numerous veterans from the Empire were interred in monumental tombs at Père Lachaise, and their prevalence in images in guidebooks and vues pittoresques suggests that the figure of the veteran held a rich sentimental value for many who still longed for the Empire during the Restoration. Two related prints focus on François-Joseph Lefebvre (1755-1820) and André Massena (1758-1817) who were both devoted Empire officers but also held successful military and political positions during the Restoration. The frontispiece, Le Dernier rendez-vous des braves, Le MI Lefebvre choisissant sa place dernière auprès du MI Masséna from Vues pittoresques (1821) and Monument of Maréchal François Joseph Lefebvre from Les Principaux monuments (1830) show several men dressed in military attire who talk with each other instead
of making any gesture whatsoever toward the tombs (Figures 4.20 and 4.21). However, the figures’ poses and attitudes, especially in front of the concessions à perpetuité, seen in the Père Lachaise prints suggest a sense of ownership in a material good. Their lingering stances, specifically in front of these tombs, imply their attitude toward the space (or tomb) as their possession; they do not require a gesture toward the tomb to designate it as their object to be consumed. This becomes particularly obvious in the print of Lefebvre choosing the location of his tomb next to Massena’s. Although he is not literally purchasing his tomb and plot in the image, he is demonstrating his intentions as a consumer. Similar notions are witnessed in figures window-shopping and in the acts of consumerism present in prints of arcades and passages. For example, the print Les galeries de bois du Palais Royal portrays several figures interacting with others and standing in front of large store windows to observe the objects for sale (Figure 4.22). The figures share similar poses and gestures—pointing to specific items—as seen in some or all of the prints of Père Lachaise.

These small acts performed by the visitors to the cemetery can be perceived then as reflections of the modern ideology of the ephemeral and a kind of spectacle similar to that witnessed in the arcades. Green argued that the spatial organization of the arcades “stimulated a series of links between parading on the boulevards, looking and acquiring” which “conjured up Parisian modernity” because of the “fluid play on different forms of visual perception and consumption.”

408 A similar arrangement of space as that of the arcades, which has until now gone unnoticed by scholars, appears in Père Lachaise where pedestrian flow is controlled by footpaths and alleys arranged around picturesque objects that allow for the familiar actions of shoppers. I argue that parading, looking, and acquiring also occurred at Père Lachaise and were represented in the guidebook prints in scenes of people strolling, briefly lingering, and pointing.

408 Green, 25.
at tombs (objects). Their movements mimicked the activity of window-shopping and the fetishization of objects associated with the experiences in the arcades and, moreover, with life in the urban world.

**Urbanization of Père Lachaise**

Elements of urban architecture and design also became a part of the natural environment at Père Lachaise, leading one historian to note that the “necropolis and metropolis became mirror images of each other.”

409 This referred to how the cemetery soon adopted what James Curl referred to as an “urban quality” because of the “paved streets lined with house-tombs” and because the “streets are named and signed, with cast-iron street furniture similar to that of streets in the cities of the living.”

410 During the Restoration comparisons to the urban world, aside from congested space and named streets, were also apparent to the people. Kselman claimed that “observers were acutely conscious of the fact that dividing cemeteries mirrored the class structure of contemporary Paris,” such that the modern notion of class separation that occurred in urban neighborhoods, types of buildings, and even specific floors of multi-storied buildings could also be witnessed in Père Lachaise in terms of monuments and burial locations.

411 Its renovation created a metropolitan sensibility which was completely opposed to the original garden, arcadian, or pastoral cemetery envisioned by adherents to the eighteenth-century cult of melancholy.

A comparison between the painting *Boulevard with Passage de l’Opéra* by Giuseppe Canella from 1830 (location unknown) with the print *Funeral Procession in Père Lachaise* from Pugin’s *Paris and its Environs* from 1831 exemplifies the spatial similarities between Parisian architecture and pathways at Père Lachaise (Figures 4.23 and 4.24). The print, *Monuments of*

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409 Burton, 133.
411 Kselman, 184.
Masséna, Lefebvre, and Père Lachaise, illustrates a similar arrangement of monumental tombs, fences used as a clear division between plots of land, and wide paths meant for pedestrians (Figure 4.25). Other previously discussed images of Père Lachaise offer more intimate views of groves with small grave markers that suggest a very personal and almost private experience in a rural cemetery. These prints from Paris and its Environs, however, imply a grandiose and metropolitan appearance in Père Lachaise. It is undeniable that for those who came to the park of Père Lachaise for touring, sight-seeing, and strolling, movements were, for the most part, dictated by elements of urban architecture such as immense monuments and paved paths.

The spectacle of Père Lachaise and its commodification

The numerous prints that depict these actions imply that Père Lachaise became a tourist site and a kind of spectacle—a place where death could not only be put on display, but also where it could become a form of entertainment, as Vanessa Schwartz has suggested with regard to the morgue.\textsuperscript{412} The objects of entertainment—dead bodies in the morgue and bones in the catacombs—were part of what she called the “spectacle of the real.”\textsuperscript{413} The deceased were also present in the cemeteries; tombs or grave markers signified their unseen dead bodies. Thus the cemetery became a “public exhibition” that, like the morgue, “fit into a modern Parisian landscape in which the banal and the everyday developed in sensational narratives, in which life—and even death—turned into the spectacular.”\textsuperscript{414} The spectacle of Père Lachaise stems not from its exhibition of real corpses but instead from its portrayal and repackaging in tourist books and thus its role as a commodity. Through its representation, Père Lachaise became an object of desire as its picturesque landscape was packaged and circulated as a commodity—“produced,

\textsuperscript{412} Schwartz, 47-88. For Schwartz, the term “spectacle” is used “in the French double sense of theater and grand display;” this corresponds to my reading of Père Lachaise as a spectacle. See Schwartz, 59.
\textsuperscript{413} Ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{414} Ibid.
marketed, consumed.”

Books that included the cemetery prints were sold in bookshops typically located in the new arcades and became, by default, part of the new consumerism indicative of these places. It is no coincidence that the bourgeoisie, who frequented these arcades, were most often portrayed in the prints, and also formed the intended audience. They purchased images of themselves, so to speak, in the act of “looking and spectating,” similar to actions seen on the Paris boulevards in the 1820s, while participating in leisurely visits to the cemetery. Furthermore, the images offered to those depicted in them a sense of ownership of the frequently featured concession à perpetuité tombs that remained unaffordable for the middle-class audience. Even though the visitors’ ownership of these monumental tombs remained a fantasy, their possession of them as portrayed in the prints blurred their middle-class identity and allowed them to pass as members of the upper class who could afford to purchase such tombs. The bourgeois consumer not only participated in the spectacle of Père Lachaise as a place of entertainment, enjoyment, and leisure but perpetuated its commodification and spectacularization (as a place of death) by purchasing its illusion in books and images of themselves.

My reason for comparing the prints of Père Lachaise to the arcades (and the activities present in the arcades) is not to criticize their commodification. Rather, I suggest that the similarities between these two places, as illustrated in the prints, stems from their emphasis on the idea of life. This can be seen in the arcades where shopping and flâneurie signified desire—of material goods, of people, and of the city—and a belief in their future. Desire thus imagines a future. A similar sense of desire is shown in the prints. They celebrate the ephemeral experience

415 Green, 95.
416 Ibid., 24-25.
417 Ibid., 10-12.
418 Elizabeth Helsinger suggested that Joseph Mallord William Turner’s picturesque travel prints from the 1820s and 1830s functioned as a commodity and were indicative of a type of nationalism in material form that could be possessed by the burgeoning middle-class who bought them. See Helsinger, “Turner and the Representation of England” in Landscape and Power, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).
of the present *and* a future through their depictions of consumers desiring the tombs, the
cemetery, and the city. Although one may expect scenes of Père Lachaise to be about
melancholy, loss, death, or nostalgia, instead these prints evoke a sense of life similar to the
arcades. It is this idea of “life” that is integral to the construction of death during the Restoration
period.

Originally meant as a place to relocate death outside of the city for hygienic purposes and
as a place for reflection on death and the brevity of life, the garden cemetery was never intended
to be a commodity. However, by the middle of the Restoration, Père Lachaise had become a
place that echoed the arrangement, the appearance, and the activities of Paris itself. In prints of
Père Lachaise sold in the arcades this was epitomized by the ways in which the enjoyments of
life and reminders of the urban world warranted a greater importance for the viewers instead of
aspects commonly associated with death, the dead, or the afterlife. Visitors thus portrayed in the
prints existed in an illusory place that was curiously meant for the living instead of a place for
the burial and commemoration of the dead. Hence, in these prints, Père Lachaise appeared not
only as a spectacle but as a borderland space where life meets death.
Conclusion

The hour was at hand, the bloody drama was expected; everyone had made his various little arrangements to see the death of the one who was going to die. Such is Paris: vice or virtue, innocence or crime, it does not matter who is the victim, so long as there is death. A minute of agony on the Place de Grève, of all the sights that are to be seen gratis at Paris, it is the most agreeable.

In this passage from *L'Âne mort et la femme guillotine* (1829), Jules Janin describes the morbid fascination with death that was prevalent during the Restoration; his story, among many others of a similar nature, attests to society’s obsession with the spectacle of death. In this dissertation I have shown how a different kind of spectacle of death was also represented in paintings and prints. I expanded the sources and inspirations for artists’ scenes of death beyond the influence of Gothic novels, guillotines, memories of bloody battles from the Revolution and Napoleonic wars, and deadly violence from the White Terror of 1815. I have argued instead that late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century medico-scientific inquiries into the physiology of a dying body were also influential factors for artists.

This recently understood medical knowledge resulted in artists’ depiction of bodies with ambiguous characteristics of the living and the dead who appear to exist in the temporal stage between life and death, what I have called a *status viatoris*. Géricault’s *Raft of the ‘Medusa’* and his paintings of heads and limbs display bodies and fragments of bodies with the qualities of *la mort apparente* that illustrate this idea. His livid, and sometimes animated, supposedly dead bodies are, as I argued, neither alive nor dead but depicted as if somewhere between life and death. This becomes evident in Géricault’s emphasis on the raw materiality of the human body.

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and the appearance of its physical digression which likely stemmed from his observations of corpses (including dissected, amputated, and decapitated bodies) at the morgue. It was there where he probably became familiar with popular ideas in contemporary medical scholarship and thought. Delacroix, too, attended to the physical qualities of figures, although it is not known if he ever visited the morgue to study corpses. However, some of his figures do suggest the influence of Géricault’s morbidly realistic figures as witnessed in the *Dante and Virgil in Hell, Massacres at Chios, Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, and *Liberty Leading the People*.

Delacroix, more than Géricault, represented the ambiguous period after life in ways beyond the singular portrayal of the body. His uses of compositional arrangements, subject matter, fragments of bodies, and figures’ use of gestures and actions also suggest a temporal progression from life toward a heroic death. Delacroix’s final representation of this in-between stage appears in *Liberty Leading the People* at the end of the Restoration. Unlike Géricault’s examples, this painting was built on various techniques used in his earlier paintings. *Liberty Leading the People* sets itself apart from the premier example of painting discussed in this dissertation, the *Raft of the ‘Medusa,’* with its dominant sense of pride versus resignation or fear in the figures’ progression toward a possible death. *Liberty Leading the People* marked the end of the Restoration wherein the representation of a *status viatoris* reflected the feelings of uncertainty regarding an unknown future but one endowed with hope, as well as a heroic, Napoleonic death.

The final chapter on prints of Père Lachaise is a kind of coda to the analysis of Géricault and Delacroix’s paintings, since its argument takes a different turn. This chapter has shown how the prints of Père Lachaise produced during the Restoration depicted the physical space of an in-between world meant ostensibly for the dead, but also for the living, or for a certain interaction between them. Unlike Géricault and Delacroix’s paintings, these images are not directly
informed by the medico-scientific explorations on the process of dying. Yet the creation and design of the cemetery was, in fact directly related to eighteenth-century medical inquiries into the living and dead body that resulted in new burial reforms. In travel guidebooks and prints, the appearance of Père Lachaise with visitors strolling across the landscape and Paris in the near background illustrates the result of these reforms. I have suggested the ways in which these images demonstrated how the cemetery became a place to experience life as well as represent the idea of life and thus, portray a variation on the idea of the *status viatoris*—a physical space where the living and the dead meet versus the physiological stages between life and death. This discussion of Père Lachaise prints broadens the scope of representations of the *status viatoris* during the Restoration and shows how the physical space at the intersection between life and death as seen in illustrations of Père Lachaise became part of the commodity culture and, moreover, an oft over-looked nineteenth-century spectacle of death.

This dissertation suggests that the Restoration era witnessed the appearance of the *status viatoris* in the visual arts partially because of the recent medical understanding of the body. The pertinence of this philosophical concept to this period becomes even more apparent when it is seen within a socio-historical context: the uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in this phenomenon paralleled the feelings of homelessness, hopelessness, melancholy, and loss spawned by the defeat of Napoleon, the return of the Bourbon monarchy, and the *mal du siècle*, among other things. However, one could logically question how this interest in medico-scientific inquiry aligns with the contemporary Romantic artist turning away from Enlightenment ideals. Artists’ engagement with science may seem antithetical to the sensibilities of Romanticism only if we think of the latter in terms of personal emotions and passions, self-involvement, and melancholic thoughts that eschewed the importance of reason and rational
thought. Yet the temporal and uncertain progression of a body as it passes from life to death, as determined by doctors and scientists, is part of what appealed to these Romantic artists and their imaginations. The Romantic sense of yearning and wanderlust was aroused by the scientific revelation of this mysterious state of “not-yet-being [...] that is, however, pointed towards fulfillment.” Furthermore, artists, in this case, Géricault and Delacroix, shared doctors’ and scientists’ interest in the benefits of direct observation and the close scrutiny of objects. Like doctors, artists relied on empirical data for their portrayal of realistic figures; for example, the visible physical characteristics of corpses acquired through dissections, autopsies, amputations, or galvanic experiments.

The artists’ intrigue, one could argue, was akin to the premise of positivism, typically associated in art with the Realism of the 1840s and 1850s. Developed by Auguste Comte (1798-1857) in the late teens and 1820s and influenced by Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), positivism proposed a new moral society, or a religion of humanity, through the acquisition of scientific knowledge that would be attained in a series of sequences: theological, metaphysical, and positive. In the latter, knowledge and intellectual advancement could be realized by the positive recognition of theories through scientific method—essentially a denial of the supernatural and metaphysical. Géricault and Delacroix, like the positivists, seemingly privileged physical information, particularly about the body, as obtained through direct examination; they strove to represent observations based upon facts. Their portrayal of bodies in the physical, not the transcendental, progression from life to death also recalls positivism’s rejection of a Christian afterlife. These various influences on the art discussed in this study not only attest to the blurring of the division between Enlightenment and Romantic ideas but also suggests the roots of positivism already present in the art of the 1820s.

420 Pieper, 76.
The significance and importance of this dissertation lies in its reevaluations of images that strike us as well-known, but which have been understood only superficially. *Death of Sardanapalus*, for instance, does not depict the death of the Assyrian ruler. The ways in which scenes of the dead and the dying can be interpreted will benefit from this interdisciplinary approach. This dissertation not only considers the historical, cultural, and social context but also analyzes eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discoveries in medicine and science to expand our understanding of well-known paintings and popular prints. In light of what were recent developments in understanding the physiology of a dying body (for example, life may still be present in a decapitated head, a body dies in stages from the circumference to the center, or a body may appear with misleading signs of death), paintings by Géricault and Delacroix that represent figures assumed to be dying or dead take on new meaning. Moreover, prints of Père Lachaise, whose significance extends beyond documenting picturesque scenes of the cemetery, remark on contemporary attitudes toward life and death and the cemetery as a place of entertainment, or even as a spectacle.

As previously stated, other works of art could benefit from this interdisciplinary approach focused on the awareness or presence of a *status viatoris*. This study could be broadened to include images from earlier or later eras. Although the historical and social implications may be different, the representation of figures within a progressive state after life and before death, or a place between the world of the living and the dead, would nonetheless still imply the idea of a *status viatoris*. Images prior to the Restoration such as David’s *Death of Marat* (1793, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels) or Jean Broc’s *The Death of Hyacinth* (1801, Musée de la Ville de Poitiers et de la Société des Antiquaires de l’Ouest, Poitiers, France) are intriguing examples to consider the ambiguous state of figures who seem to be dead or dying.
For example, David’s original title, *Marat à son dernier soupir*, immediately announces Marat’s state at the precipice where life is separated from death. The presence and lack of wounds in both Marat and Hyacinth would also initiate new ways to comprehend the relationship between contemporary medico-scientific scholarship on the dying body and its effect on artists’ portrayals of dying or dead figures. In a different way, the antipastoralism of Courbet’s *A Burial at Ornans* (1849-50, Musée d’Orsay, Paris)—the lack of a body in a burial scene, its detachment from town, church, or arcadia—recalls the reading of prints of Père Lachaise.\(^\text{421}\) This painting, in a rather unique way, could be interpreted as a representation of the *status viatoris*, similar to that of the prints. *Burial at Ornans* essentially illustrates the physical place or intersection where life and death meet. This burial scene is a depiction of a body (or absent body) on the voyage from its worldly life to its place (supposedly in a grave) in death without any sense of an afterlife. However, as in the prints, this bodily progression from life to death is not shown. Courbet has instead emphasized a static and awkward moment in the painting just prior to the sacramental ritual prayers.\(^\text{422}\) The curé, the pallbearers, sacristan, and altar boys stand in for Catholic ritual, but “death” as such is abruptly physical and absent. There are certainly many other images that could be studied with the ideas and goals established in this dissertation beyond the scope of the Restoration that would further any comprehension of a period construction of death.

My examination of paintings and prints in this dissertation, then, broadens our understanding of these images as reflective of current cultural, social, and political circumstances

\(^{421}\) My use of the word ‘antipastoralism’ denotes a rejection of the pastoral decorum of a harmonious rural landscape filled with sentimentality as well as a lingering tension with its opposite – the city and urban life as witnessed in the prints of Père Lachaise.

and meanings. The pertinence of these paintings to the Restoration period is articulated, for example, in the sense of hopelessness and resignation witnessed in the *Raft of the ‘Medusa’* or *Massacres at Chios*, the defeated heroism in *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, the emotional pathos exhibited in Géricault’s *Anatomical Fragments* and *Severed Heads*, and the fear and lack of will to defend one’s country (somewhat akin to the homelessness and loss of Frenchness) featured in *Death of Sardanapalus*. These readings, among many other interpretations put forth by numerous art historians, demonstrate the ways in which Géricault and Delacroix focused on other issues and more than just the mysterious and ambiguous aspects of a dying body. However, these other analyses are nonetheless enriched by the consideration of how some figures are simultaneously portrayed with the contradictory characteristics of the living and the dead or, in the case of the prints of Père Lachaise, how the cemetery equally appears as the intersection of life and death (or the living and the dead). Their meanings become even more relevant to the Restoration era which, to a great extent, witnessed the effects of recent medical studies in the treatment of and attitudes toward the dying, the dead, and death. This unique reading, then, of images that represent the idea of a *status viatoris* as reflective of contemporary issues pertinent to the Restoration offers a new means to view and read these familiar paintings and (less-familiar) prints concerned with the alluring subject of death.
APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATIONS
Figure 1.1

Figure 1.2

Figure 1.3

Figure 1.4

Figure 1.5

Figure 1.6

Richard Brinsley Peake, *People Visiting the Morgue in Paris, Including a Soldier in Full Uniform and a Mother and Her Young Son, May 1, 1816*. Lithograph, 16 x 22 cm, Wellcome Library, London.
Figure 1.7

Courtrin, after A. Boblet, *Vue intérieure de la morgue*, c. 1820-29. Lithograph, 11.7 x 16.5 cm, from *Journal des Anecdotes*. 
Figure 1.8

Figure 2.1

Théodore Géricault, *Charging Chasseur*, 1812. Oil on canvas, 3.49 x 2.66 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure 2.2

Théodore Géricault, *Wounded Cuirassier*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 3.58 x 2.95 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure 2.3

Figure 2.4
Théodore Géricault, *Executioner Strangling a Prisoner*, c. 1815. Pencil, pen, and ink wash, 13.4 x 20.8 cm, Musée Bonnat, Bayonne.
Figure 2.5

Théodore Géricault, *Execution in Rome*, c. 1815. Graphite, pen and ink with brown wash, 25.7 x 37.4 cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
Figure 2.6

Figure 2.7
Figure 2.8

Théodore Géricault, *Portrait of General Lelletier on his Deathbed*, 1818. Oil on canvas, 24 x 32.5 cm, Winterthur collection, Reinhart am Rheinholz.
Figure 2.9

Figure 2.10

Théodore Géricault, *Raft of the Medusa* (detail lower left), 1818-1819. Oil on canvas, 4.90 x 7.16 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure 2.11

Figure 2.12

Figure 2.13

Théodore Géricault, *Sketch of a Drowned Man*, c. 1818-1819. Oil on canvas, 31 x 33 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen.
Théodore Géricault, *Portrait of a Drowned Man*, c. 1818. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 46.4 x 38.1 cm, St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri.
Figure 2.15

Théodore Géricault, *Anatomical Fragments*, 1818-1819. Oil on canvas, 59 x 64 cm, Musée Fabre, Montpellier.
Figure 2.16

Figure 2.17

Figure 2.18

Figure 2.19

Théodore Géricault, *Head of a Guillotined Man*, c. 1818-1819. Oil on panel, 41 x 38 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.
Figure 2.20
Attributed to Théodore Géricault, *Couple United in Death*, c. 1818-1819.
Oil on canvas, 45.5 x 55 cm, collection of Alain Delon, Paris.
Figure 2.21

Attributed to Théodore Géricault, *Anatomical Fragments*, c. 1818-1819. Oil on canvas, 37.5 x 46 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen (owned by Musée du Louvre).
Figure 2.22

Attributed to Théodore Géricault, *Anatomical Fragments*, c. 1818-1819.
Oil on canvas, 54 x 64 cm, collection of Robert Lebel, Paris.
Figure 2.23

Théodore Géricault, *Dying and Emaciated Old Man*, c. 1818-1820. Pierre noire pencil on paper, 11.6 x 23.9 cm, Musée Bonnat, Bayonne.
Figure 2.24

Ary Scheffer, *Géricault on His Death Bed*, 1824. Oil on canvas, 36 x 46 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure 2.25

Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, *The Death of Brutus*, 1793. Oil on canvas, 144 x 111 cm, Musée de la Révolution française, Vizille.
Figure 2.26

Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, *The Return of Marcus Sextus*, 1799. Oil on canvas, 2.17 x 2.43 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure 2.27

Louis Hersent, *Death of Xavier Bichat*, 1817. Oil on canvas, .8 x 1 m, Musée d’histoire de la médecine, L’Ecole de médecine, Paris.
Figure 3.1
Eugène Delacroix, *Dante and Virgil in Hell*, 1822. Oil on canvas, 1.89 x 2.46 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure 3.2

Eugène Delacroix, *Massacres at Chios*, 1824. Oil on canvas, 4.19 x 3.54 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure 3.3

Figure 3.4

Eugène Delacroix, *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, 1826. Oil on canvas, 2.13 x 1.42 m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux.
Figure 3.5

Figure 3.6

Eugène Delacroix, *Rhea Silvia Nursing her Children* (*Etude de personnages d’après l’antique, et buste d’enfant, la Charité*), c.1820s. Black lead, 13.5 x 20.4 cm, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des dessins, Paris.
Figure 3.7

Eugène Delacroix, *Niobid Holding her Slain Children (Plusieurs études de figures)*, c.1820s. Graphite pencil, 13.5 x 20.4 cm, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des dessins, Paris.
Eugène Delacroix, Study for ‘La Grèce’ (Croquis de personnage), c.1820s. Brown ink and graphite pencil, 13.5 x 20.4 cm, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des dessins, Paris.
Figure 3.9

Eugène Delacroix, *Sketch of Arm from Raft of the 'Medusa.'* 1824. Graphite, 12.8 x 18.8 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.
Figure 3.11

Eugène Delacroix, *Death of Sardanapalus*, 1827.
Oil on canvas, 3.92 x 4.96 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure 3.12

Eugène Delacroix, July 28: Liberty Leading the People, 1830. Oil on canvas, 2.60 x 3.25 m, Musée du Louvre, Paris.
Figure 4.1

Giovanni Antonio Galignani, Plan of Paris and Environs, c. late 19th century. Colored lithograph, 43.5 x 57 cm, Providence Public Library, Special Collections, Providence, Rhode Island.
Figure 4.2

Figure 4.3

Figure 4.4

Figure 4.5

Figure 4.6

Figure 4.7

Figure 4.8

Figure 4.9

W. Price, after Augustus Pugin, *La Morgue, Quai Notre Dame, July 1, 1829, 1831*. Etching, 8.9 x 14.3 cm, from *Paris and its Environs: displayed in a series of picturesque views.*
Figure 4.10
Figure 4.11

Figure 4.12

Figure 4.13

Christophe Civeton, *View of Greffult Family Tomb*, 1829. Pen and brown crayon wash, 5.5 x 8.1 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, Paris.
Figure 4.14

Figure 4.15

Anonymous, *Galerie Colbert*, c. late 1820s. Engraving, size and location unknown.
Figure 4.16

Jazet, after drawing by Duplat, *Tomb of Abélard and Héloïse*, 1821. Lithograph, 10.5 x 7.1 cm, from Marchant de Beaumont, *Vues pittoresques, historiques et morales du cimetière du Père La Chaise*. 
Figure 4.17

Jazet, after drawing by Duplat, *View of the Bosquet du dragon*, 1821. Lithograph, 10.5 x 7.1 cm, from Marchant de Beaumont, *Vues pittoresques, historiques et morales du cimetière du Père La Chaise*.
Figure 4.18

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Figure 4.21

Lasalle, Monument of Maréchal François Joseph Lefebvre, 1830. Lithograph, book height 33 cm, from Les Principaux monuments funéraires du Père Lachaise.
Figure 4.23

Figure 4.24

Figure 4.25

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―*Status Viatoris—The Moments Between Life and Death—in Théodore Géricault’s *Raft of the Medusa,*‖* The Pennsylvania State University, October 2008
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