

Delacroix, 'J.' and 'Still life with lobsters'

by MICHÈLE HANNOOSH and BERTRAND and LORRAINE SERVOIS



5. *Still life with lobsters*, by Eugène Delacroix. 1827. Canvas, 80.5 by 106.5 cm. (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

'I'VE FINISHED the General's animal picture', Delacroix wrote to his friend Charles-Raymond Soulier on 28th September 1827, 'and I've dug up a rococo frame which I am having regilded and which will do wonderfully. It has already struck the fancy of a store of collectors and I think that it will be amusing at the Salon'.¹ As Delacroix here suggests, the *Still life with lobsters* (Fig. 5) is a very curious painting. While lobsters sometimes figure in still-life painting, usually on a table with game or fruit, Delacroix's picture is very different.² Two enormous cooked

lobsters lie in the foreground of a distant landscape depicting a hunting scene; the lobsters are surrounded by a pheasant, a jay and a hare, a hunting rifle, a tasselled mesh game-bag and a Scottish plaid; a lone (live) lizard occupies the foreground; the perspective is from high up, looking out over the countryside. The picture makes little narrative or iconographical sense: although one may, as others have done, invoke a 'British' theme in the hunters, arms and plaid, the prominent lobsters are wholly incongruous with these other elements.³ The brilliantly

The authors thank Bénédicte Derieux for her help with research for this article, and the owner of the 'album de Beffes' for graciously enabling us to study it.

¹ 'J'ai achevé le tableau d'animaux du général et je lui ai déterré un cadre rococo que je fais redorer et qui fera merveille. Il a déjà donné dans l'œil à une provision d'amateurs et je crois que cela sera drôle au Salon'; A. Joubin, ed.: *Correspondance générale de Eugène Delacroix*, Paris 1932–38, I, pp. 196–97 (cited hereafter as Joubin).

² Works entitled *Still life with lobster*, by Anne Vallayer-Coster and Jan Davidsz de Heem, are in the Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo OH. The Joconde database of works of art in French collections lists sixteen other still-life paintings with

lobsters executed before Delacroix's, mostly by Dutch artists of the seventeenth century; only one, from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, contains a hint of landscape. Artstor contains a further ten, none of which are in a landscape. In the catalogue of the 1827–28 Salon, Delacroix's painting was entitled '*Tableau de nature morte*'.

³ The 'British' character of the picture was noted as early as E. Moreau-Nélaton's *Delacroix raconté par lui-même*, Paris 1916, I, p. 81; see also L. Johnson: *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix. A Critical Catalogue*, Oxford 1982–2002, I, no. 161 (cited hereafter as J followed by catalogue number).

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6. *Portrait of a child (Adrien?)*, by Eugène Delacroix. c.1822. Canvas, 21.7 by 16 cm. (Private collection).



7. *Portrait of Mme de Pron(?)*, by Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun. 1818. Pastel, 40.6 by 32.4 cm. (Present whereabouts unknown).



8. *Portrait of a youth in a blue beret*, by Eugène Delacroix. c.1822? Canvas, 40 by 32 cm. (Musée Eugène Delacroix, Paris).

coloured still life boldly set against the deeply recessive landscape is consistent with Delacroix's reliance in this period – one that also produced the *Death of Sardanapalus* – on 'romantic' theatricality and flourish. Yet despite its prominence in the Louvre since 1934, and the near-universal admiration it has gained, the still life remains one of the painter's least studied works, its idiosyncrasies largely ignored, its *intended* strangeness unaccounted for, its origins and inspiration unexplained.⁴ Scholars who have commented on the oddity of the lobsters, at least, have seen them either as allusions to still-life precedents or as a sly comment on the conservative politics of the man for whom the picture was painted, through an association of the lobster with the backward-moving crayfish.⁵

Research conducted independently led the present writers to similar hypotheses about some of the questions surrounding this painting. Working together has allowed us not only to clarify some of its idiosyncrasies, but also to shed light on an obscure but crucial chapter of Delacroix's life and relations involving at least two other paintings and several unpublished letters. Last, but hardly least, it enabled us to resolve with certainty one of the few remaining mysteries in Delacroix's biography: the identity of the famous 'J.' with whom he was carrying on an assiduous flirtation between 1822 and 1824, as recorded in his journal.

It has long been known that the *Still life with lobsters* was executed in 1826 for General Charles-Yves-César-Cyr, comte de Coëtlosquet, at the latter's château in Beffes, a village in the

Cher.⁶ In June that year Delacroix spent time there on a visit to Soulier who managed the property; it was then that he began the painting.⁷ In an unpublished letter to Soulier of 17th July 1826, Coëtlosquet expresses his hope that Delacroix will 'finish his dining-room painting' for which they will provide a fine frame and a place of honour in the château.⁸ This was the *Still life with lobsters*. It is unclear whether the initiative came from Soulier, who was an amateur painter, from Delacroix himself or from Coëtlosquet, although the latter was not a collector and owned virtually no other paintings.⁹ A brilliant Napoleonic general who had taken part in all the major campaigns of the Empire, Coëtlosquet had become during the Restoration a high-ranking administrator in the War Department, serving as Director of Personnel from 19th December 1821 and as interim Minister from 19th October 1823 to 5th August 1824. Delacroix had met him through Soulier, whose relationship with this family was close: Coëtlosquet was the nephew of the former councillor of State and Director, under the Restoration, of the *domaine extraordinaire* (state funds distributed as pensions and retainers to loyal subjects), the colourful marquis de La Maisonfort, to whom Soulier had served as private secretary since at least 1814 and whom he had followed to Italy when La Maisonfort was appointed Minister to Tuscany in July 1820.¹⁰ The marquis's wife had stayed behind in Paris along with their daughter Mme de Pron, both of whom lived at Coëtlosquet's ministerial residence in rue Saint-Dominique until he left the War Department in 1828. Thus

⁴ Donated by Etienne Moreau-Nélaton in 1906, the painting was exhibited from 1907 in the Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris, before entering the Louvre in 1934. The 'cadre rococo' mentioned by Delacroix (see note 1 above) is visible in early photographs; see F. Lachin and P. Rosenberg *et al.*: exh. cat. *De Corot aux Impressionnistes, donations Moreau-Nélaton*, Paris (Grand Palais) 1991, pp.7–8.

⁵ Johnson (J161) relates the lobsters to Wilkie's *Chelsea Pensioners reading the Gazette of the Battle of Waterloo*. Nancy Ann Finlay ('Animal Themes in the Painting of Eugène Delacroix', Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1984, pp.35–41), followed by Kenneth Bendiner (*Food in Painting: From the Renaissance to the Present*, London 2004, p.46), relates them to Delacroix's lithograph of 1822, *Les Ecrevisses à Longchamps*. John W. McCoubrey acknowledges the 'absurdity' of the lobsters and their incompatibility with the landscape, but explains the painting as 'an allegory of earth, sky and sea' in the tradition of Daniel Seghers; J.W. McCoubrey: 'Studies in French Still-Life Painting, Theory and Criticism 1660–1860', Ph.D. diss. (Institute of Fine Arts, New

York, 1958), pp.151–52. Robert James Bantens interprets the lizard as a salamander and sees the picture as an allegory of the elements; R.J. Bantens: 'Delacroix's "Still Life with Lobsters"', *Southeastern College Art Conference Review* 9/2 (Spring 1977), pp.69–73, esp. p.70.

⁶ In a letter to Soulier of 23rd March 1850, Delacroix writes that a month or two earlier he saw for sale 'le tableau d'animaux que j'ai fait à Beffes il y a quelques vingt-quatre ans'; Joubin, III, p.11. Adolphe Moreau, whose father purchased the picture in 1853, catalogued it as 'Painted at Beffes, in 1826, for M. le général de Coëtlosquet'; see A. Moreau: *E. Delacroix et son œuvre*, Paris 1873, p.169.

⁷ It is uncertain how long Delacroix's stay was: the two letters published in Joubin date from Sunday 18th and Monday 19th June 1826.

⁸ Coëtlosquet hopes 'que le seigneur La Croix va terminer son tableau de salle à manger et qu' alors nous lui donnerons un beau cadre pour le faire figurer au mieux dans Beffes'; sale, Hôtel Drouot-Montaigne, Paris, *Manuscrits et lettres autographes*, 15th May 2001, lot 72.

Delacroix's letters to Soulier from the mid-1820s often evoke the 'General' (Coëtlosquet), the 'marquise' (de La Maisonfort, wife of the marquis, Coëtlosquet's uncle), 'Mme de Pron' (their daughter, Coëtlosquet's first cousin) and the 'Dominicans', a playful reference to the street in which they lived.¹¹

But Delacroix's connection to this family had in fact been established earlier than the mid-1820s when the painting was executed. It was the collector Roger Leybold who first proposed that the unknown woman, referred to simply as 'J.', with whom much of Delacroix's journal from 1822 to 1824 is concerned, may have been the wife of General Coëtlosquet. As is well known from the journal, 'J.' had been involved with Soulier, and during the latter's absence in Italy had been courted by Delacroix. The entry for 27th October 1822 introduces the story in a manner worthy of a comic opera:

My dear Soulier is back [. . .] At first I thought only of how happy I was to see him. Then my heart stopped. As I was getting ready to take him up to my room, I remembered a wretched letter whose handwriting he might recognise. I hesitated. That destroyed all the pleasure I had in seeing him again. I tried various subterfuges; I pretended to have lost my key, what have you. Finally, I pulled myself together. He went away, saying he would come back to collect me in the evening, at which time we went out for a walk. I hope that the wrong I've done him won't affect his relationship with . . . Please God that he may remain unaware of it!¹²

It is also clear from Delacroix's letters to Soulier from late 1820 to early 1822 that the latter had asked Delacroix to paint a portrait of the lady's son, 'Adrien'.¹³ An unfinished portrait of a child, which was passed down in Soulier's family and was copied by Alfred Robaut in 1878, was tentatively identified by the late Lee Johnson as the unknown 'Adrien' referred to in Delacroix's letters (Fig. 6).¹⁴ The picture resurfaced in 2000, but with no new information to confirm or reject the identification.

Leybold had based his identification of 'J.' on an unsigned letter then in his collection, in which the lady writes to Delacroix: 'the G[ener]al is asking for his armour back'. Since Delacroix had noted in his journal on 1st May 1824 that he could borrow some Mameluke arms and armour from General 'Kot[los]quet' [*sic*], Leybold surmised that the lady was Coëtlosquet's wife. This hypothesis was accepted and transmitted by Raymond Escholier and René Huyghe.¹⁵ Plausible though it is, it runs up against the fact that Coëtlosquet remained, for his entire life, a bachelor.¹⁶

So if 'J.' was not Coëtlosquet's wife, who was she? The many drafts of letters which Delacroix pens to her in his journal between 15th April 1823 and 19th June 1824 imply that she was a woman of some standing. She had a son at school whom she visited on Thursdays and Sundays, stopping each time at Delacroix's studio

⁹ His posthumous inventory lists only two paintings; Archives départementales du Cher, E-13778, 'Inventaire après décès des objets appartenant à Charles-Yves-César-Cyr, comte de Coëtlosquet', 4th February 1836, no.2. Although it is often claimed that *Still life with lobsters* was commissioned by Coëtlosquet, this may be a (mistaken) inference from Moreau's statement that it was painted for him; see Moreau, *op. cit.* (note 6), p. 169.

¹⁰ A full account of Soulier's life is given in M. Hannoosh's edition of Delacroix's *Journal*, Paris 2009, (cited hereafter as Hannoosh), II, pp. 2339–43.

¹¹ See Joubin, I, p. 186 (18th November 1826); p. 212 (11th March 1828); and p. 224 (20th October 1828).

¹² 'Mon cher Soulier est de retour [. . .] Le premier moment a été tout au bonheur de le revoir. J'ai senti ensuite un serrement pénible. Comme je me disposais à le faire monter dans ma chambre, je me suis souvenu d'une maudite lettre dont l'écriture eût pu être reconnue. J'ai hésité. Cela a déchiqueté le plaisir que j'avais à le voir. J'ai usé de subterfuges; j'ai feint d'avoir perdu



9. *Portrait of Newton Fielding*, by J. Nogues. Pencil drawing. (Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Paris).



10. Eugène Delacroix peignant les fresques de la chambre de Mme de Pron, by ?Charles-Raymond Soulier. 1826. Watercolour, 'album de Beffes', 10.8 by 16.5 cm. (Private collection).

at 16 rue des Grès (now rue Cujas). She also had a brother (10th November 1823); and Soulier was a friend of her family (15th April 1823). Despite the wrong (and perhaps deliberately misleading) initial and a significant difference of age and class, these clues lead straight to another woman in Coëtlosquet's circle: his first cousin, Mme de Pron. A comparison of the latter's handwriting with that of 'J.' establishes this identity with certainty.¹⁷

Louise Du Bois Des Cours de La Maisonfort was the daughter of Soulier's patron and protector, Antoine-Philippe Du Bois Des

ma clef: que sais-je. —Enfin, j'ai remis ordre. Il m'a quitté pour me reprendre le soir que nous avons été faire une promenade. J'espère que mon tort envers lui n'influera pas sur ses relations avec . . . Dieu veuille qu'il l'ignore toujours!; see Hannoosh, I, pp. 93–94.

¹³ See notes 25 and 26 below.

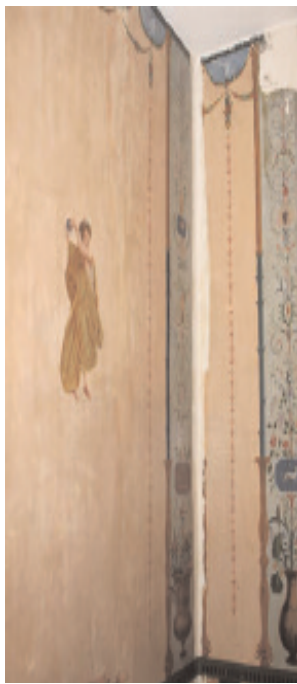
¹⁴ J[L]75 and fourth supplement.

¹⁵ R. Escholier: *Delacroix et les femmes*, Paris 1963, pp. 50ff.; and R. Huyghe: *Delacroix, ou le combat solitaire*, Paris 1964, p. 537.

¹⁶ R. Kerviler: *Essai d'une bio-bibliographie de la famille du Coëtlosquet*, Vannes 1897, p. 14. For 'Déclaration de succession' for Coëtlosquet, see Paris, Archives de Paris, DQ7/3840, 21st June 1836.

¹⁷ The letters from 'J.', formerly belonging to Roger Leybold, are now in the J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (Special Collections, acquisition no. 860470); see Appendix 2 below. The handwriting matches that of Mme de Pron's autograph will (Archives départementales du Cher, archives notariales, notaire Naudin).

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11. Fresco by ?Charles-Raymond Soulier. 1826. 350 by 150 cm. North-east corner, dining room, château de Beffes. Photograph 2006.



12. Fresco by ?Charles-Raymond Soulier. 1826. 350 by 180 cm. East wall, dining room, château de Beffes. Photograph 2006.

Cours, marquis de La Maisonfort. Born at the La Maisonfort château in Bitry on 17th May 1787, she grew up in the turbulent years of the Revolution during which the château was confiscated and sold: when her parents fled in 1791, she remained with her maternal grandmother in the nearby town of La Charité. But when, during the Terror, she was 'pursued as the daughter of émigrés so as to be thrown into an orphanage', she was entrusted to a humble family from Nevers who raised her as their niece.¹⁸ Her brother Maximilien, whom Delacroix later knew, was born in exile on 13th June 1792.¹⁹ On 1st February 1808 she married Louis-Jules-Barbon Rossignol de Pron, by whom she had a son, Adrien, born in Nevers on 29th November that same year. The château at Beffes, which had been her mother's, was given as her dowry. With the reinstatement of the Bourbons, and her father's consequent return to the centre of power, her fortunes rose: she was close to the court and moved in high society.²⁰ In 1818 Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, a close friend of her mother's, drew her portrait, usually identified as the picture reproduced here (Fig.7).²¹ Her marriage, however, was disastrous: her husband was interned early on and was later declared insane (22nd August 1822); since divorce was not permitted under the Restoration, a formal separation of property was declared on 9th February 1829.²²

¹⁸ The family was named Lallemand; see marquis de La Maisonfort: *Mémoires d'un agent royaliste sous la Révolution, l'Empire et la Restauration 1763-1827*, ed. H. de Changy, Paris 1998, p.241, and note 20.

¹⁹ See Joubin, I, p.180, in which Delacroix describes an outing with 'the good general' (Coëtlosquet) and 'the good colonel' (Maximilien).

²⁰ Mentions of Mme de Pron invariably misspell her name and/or misidentify her, so she is easy to overlook in the literature. Dr Whalley calls her 'countess de Pont'; H. Wickham, ed.: *Journals and Correspondence of Thomas Sedgewick Whalley*, London 1862, II, p.493, letter of 21st August 1823. The poet and dramatist Jean-Pons-Guillaume Viennet, calling her 'la comtesse de Prum', mentions meeting her at the salon of Viscountess Ruolz; J.-P.-G. Viennet: *Journal*, Paris 1955, p.87. In Vigée-Lebrun's list of her own works she is given as 'Madame de Pront, nièce [sic] de M. de Coëtlosquet'; E. Vigée-Lebrun: *Souvenirs*, ed. C. Herrmann, Paris 1984, II, p.353; see also note 21 below.

When Delacroix first met her, probably in April 1822, she lived with her mother at her cousin Coëtlosquet's official residence at 62 rue Saint-Dominique. She nevertheless seems to have retained accommodation in the hôtel du Domaine Extraordinaire at 9 place Vendôme, which had been her father's official address and where Soulier had a garret room from 1816 until his departure for Italy. Indeed it was from there that on 2nd April 1819 she registered her son Adrien de Pron for the Collège Louis-le-Grand where he remained until 30th September 1825.²³ The entrance to the school was in rue des Grès, where Delacroix had his studio. And so it was that, in the spring of 1823, on Thursdays and Sundays when the pupils had visiting hours, Sarah, as she was familiarly called, stopped at the painter's studio en route to see her son.²⁴

The adventure may have begun innocently enough. From 24th November 1820 to 30th July 1821, Delacroix expresses to Soulier his readiness to fulfil his friend's request to paint the child's portrait: 'I haven't forgotten the commission which you charged me with for the little boy's portrait'; 'I haven't yet had any news of Adrien. I don't know if they will be able to obtain authorisation for him to leave the lycée to sit for me. In any case, I'm still at your disposal for that'; 'I haven't had a single word of the little fellow or of the portrait to be done. I'm ready; I'm just waiting for the person'; '. . . M. Viéton [?], your little fellow's tutor [. . .] came by bringing a letter from you in which you sent him to me about the portrait. But it transpires that the little boy cannot in any way leave his school for this purpose. I am therefore forced, despite my good will, to wait till a little later'.²⁵ On 15th April 1822, emerging from a period of intense work on his *Dante and Virgil* in preparation for the Salon, Delacroix wrote: 'I saw la Cara. She took the trouble to come to my place; at the time I was deep in the work that I've just finished. She herself could tell that I was short of time [. . .] At the first opportunity I'll be very pleased to make good on the promise I made to you'.²⁶ This must have been Delacroix's first real meeting with 'J.', and the reference to the 'promise' suggests that it concerned plans for Adrien's portrait. Her first extant letter to him, postmarked 3rd June 1822 (see Appendix 2a), has a formal tone: 'I received, Sir, your kind note on Thursday at 9 in the morning. If you are free, I will be honoured to go to your house, and I beg of you beforehand to accept my sincere and warmest thanks'.

Was this in order to view the portrait already under way? In fact, it is not known whether the portrait was ever painted. If it was, then the sitter would have been aged thirteen and a half at the time. The sitter in Fig.6 (J[L]75), however, seems considerably younger than this and, unless Adrien was late to mature, could not be he. Of Delacroix's unattributed male portraits, *Portrait of a youth in a blue beret* (J69; Fig.8), is a possibility, since the sitter in a scholar's type of beret seems closer in age to the adolescent Adrien. Once thought to be Delacroix's nephew, Charles de Verninac, represented in other portraits by Delacroix (e.g. J62), the sitter of

²¹ Letters from Mme de Pron and her mother, the marquise de La Maisonfort, to Vigée-Lebrun's niece testify to this friendship; Paris, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Papiers Vigée-Lebrun/Tripier Lefranc autog.C52.1 D3 sdo4 28895-98, 23rd July 1842; and 28899-28901, 29th July 1842. In her memoirs, Vigée-Lebrun lists the portrait of Mme de Pron under 1818, the same year indicated in the lower right of the portrait reproduced here (Fig.7), but the identity of the sitter is in fact uncertain. It has been auctioned several times since 1983; see N. Jeffares: *Dictionary of Pastellists before 1800*, London 2006, p.551, most recently by Audap-Solanet, Godeau-Veillet, Paris, 3rd April 1992, lot 218.

²² Posthumous inventory for Mme de Pron, 18th October 1842, Archives départementales du Cher, E 13 794.

²³ Paris, Archives du Lycée Louis-le-Grand, DF 609, no.428, and DF 610, p.105. We thank Mme Marianne Cayatte for making these files available. The postmarks reveal



13. 'Bacchant', fresco from Pompeii. Third style. 15–45 AD. 30 cm. high. (Museo Archeologico, Naples, inv.9297).



14. 'Bacchant', fresco from Pompeii. Third style. 15–45 AD. 27 cm. high. (Museo Archeologico, Naples, inv.9295).



15. 'Bacchant', fresco from Pompeii. Third style. 15–45 AD. 27 cm. high. (Museo Archeologico, Naples, inv.9295).

J69 was tentatively identified by Johnson as Newton Fielding; but to judge from a drawing of Newton in a Fielding family memoir (Fig.9), this is not the case. The provenances of the portraits are unhelpful: the *Portrait of a youth* (J69) was in Delacroix's studio when he died and the unfinished *Portrait of a child* (J[L]75) belonged to Soulier. Johnson reports Robaut's private note that Soulier's son, who owned the *Portrait of a child* when Robaut copied it, 'believed' he remembered that his father 'thought' it represented one of 'Fielding's' sons. Was this, as Johnson suggests, a deception on Soulier's part in order to hide the truth from his own son? But the uncertainty of the recollection, at two removes, seems to make it unreliable.²⁷ More important, why would Soulier need to hide the 'truth', since it can be proved that Adrien, born in 1808 when Soulier did not even know Mme de Pron, was not his son? There would be no scandal in owning the portrait of the cherished grandson of his former patron and protector. Finally, if either portrait represented Adrien, one might ask why it did not belong to Mme de Pron, whose visits to Delacroix's studio it would, at the very least, have justified. In the absence of new information, the question must remain open, including the possibility that the portrait of Adrien was never painted and that our two pictures are of different sitters altogether.

In any case, by October 1822, as we have seen from Delacroix's diary, his relations with Mme de Pron were well advanced. Soulier's return from Italy must have put a stop to them temporarily – the draft of a letter, which Delacroix wrote

in his journal entry of 15th April 1823, implies that he and 'J.' had stopped seeing one another, until a new encounter had 'reawakened everything'. By 5th November 1823, Soulier notwithstanding, the relationship had started up once again, as a recently discovered letter from an ardent Delacroix reveals: 'Tell me, my dearest, that you are not sorry for the moments of happiness which you give to your friend; tell me that you do not begrudge me them [. . .] Love me as I love you, as Love wants us to love. To take away a single portion of his divine pleasures is to deceive him, to go against his will [. . .] I would like to circulate in your veins with your blood and go straight to your heart, to see if I occupy it in full . . .'.²⁸ But Mme de Pron had decided to break it off, or at least to cool it down. While Delacroix presses her for more visits, reasoning that women can love more than one person at a time, 'as men do', she, in her response, sets the following Sunday (16th November 1823; see Appendix 2b) for their final tryst: 'Then afterwards, everything won't be finished, indeed not; I want a really good, really open friendship; I don't want to torment you, I want you to be happy, and for my soul to understand yours so that your sorrows, shared by me, will be less burdensome to you'. A final exchange in December (see Appendix 2e) somewhat reverses the roles, Mme de Pron reproaching Delacroix for ignoring her for a whole month while she has been caring for her sick child: 'Pity me, I nurse him, I console him, and I moan all alone – what tears a poor mother sheds [. . .] not one visit from you, not a single word', and

that Mme de Pron's letters were sent from the post office near her home in place Vendôme.

²⁴ The letter of 23rd July 1842 cited in note 21 is signed 'Sarah', and she is referred to thus in the unpublished memoirs of her aunt Rose-Esther de Changy, p.15 (private collection) and on her death certificate at the *mairie* of Beffes.

²⁵ 'Je n'ai pas oublié la commission dont tu m'as chargé pour le portrait du petit garçon'; Joubin, I, p.98, 24th November 1820; 'Je n'ai pas encore entendu parler d'Adrien. Je ne sais pas si on pourra obtenir facilement qu'il sorte de son lycée pour poser. Dans tous les cas, je suis toujours à ta disposition pour cela'; *ibid.*, I, p.123, 30th March 1821; 'Je n'entends pas parler en aucune façon du petit bonhomme et du portrait à faire. Je suis prêt. Je n'attends plus que l'homme'; *ibid.*, I, p.127, 30th April 1821; '. . . M. Viéton [?], précepteur de ton petit bonhomme [. . .] avait à me transmettre une lettre de toi, par laquelle tu me l'adressais pour le

portrait. Mais il se trouve que le petit ne peut en aucune façon sortir de son collège à cette intention. Je suis donc forcé, malgré ma bonne volonté, d'attendre un peu plus tard'; *ibid.*, I, p.129, 30th July 1821.

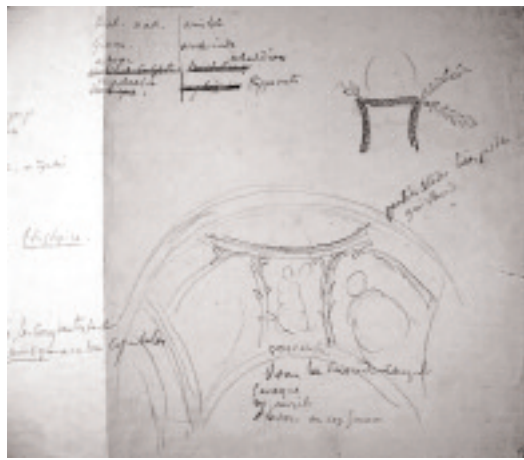
²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, pp.141–42. This is the only time Delacroix calls her 'la Cara', which is obviously aimed at the Italophone Soulier and may have been his name for her. It should equally be noted that in the extant sources Delacroix does not call her 'Julie'; Escholier, *op. cit.* (note 15), p.51.

²⁷ 'M. Soulier à qui appartient ce joli échantillon croit se rappeler que son père pensait que c'était un fils de Fielding'; Johnson, *op. cit.* (note 3), p.194.

²⁸ Sale, Galerie Koller, Geneva, *Autographes et manuscrits, vente Marcel Bergeon*, 12th November 2006, lot 1613 (see Appendix 1a). We thank Eric Bertin for bringing this lot to our attention and Mme Green for making this letter available to us.

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16. Detail of a sheet of notes and drawings for the Palais Bourbon library, by Eugène Delacroix. c.1840. Pencil, 25.1 by 39 cm. (Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris).



Delacroix lamely defending himself on the grounds of his own (unstated) 'problems [. . .] and adversities of more than one kind'.

Mme de Pron may have been going through a turbulent time of her own. In addition to her double flirtation with Delacroix and Soulier, there is circumstantial evidence that she may, at the same time, have been pregnant by her cousin Coëtlosquet: on 15th February 1823, a certain Charles-Louis, the natural son of a 'demoiselle Louise Du Bois', a 'rentière' of thirty whose address is not stated, and an unnamed father, was born in Paris at a midwife's in rue d'Argenteuil, a few streets away from place Vendôme.²⁹ Coëtlosquet was later to leave most of his fortune to this boy, whose mother's name was a shortened version of Mme de Pron's, Louise Du Bois (Des Cours de La Maisonfort), and whose forenames were those of himself and Louise.³⁰ The boy was put at a young, but unknown, age in the care of a guardian, who, after the boy died on 28th January 1842 at the age of eighteen, made all the legal declarations that his parents had never been known to the child or anyone around him, that the mother was 'purely imaginary' and her name chosen at random so as to hide that of the true mother, and that he had never been recognised by either parent.³¹ Although this evidence is purely circumstantial – Mme de Pron was thirty-five, not thirty, on 15th February 1823, Dubois is a common name and may indeed have been chosen because of this, Coëtlosquet may have been providing for his own child by a different mother, or for Mme de Pron's child by a different father, etc. – the amount of evidence is nevertheless compelling.³² In addition, Coëtlosquet left all his possessions, including his paintings and engravings, to Mme de Pron rather than to his own sisters.³³

After attempts to revive it in fits and starts over the first half of 1824, Delacroix's fling with Mme de Pron thus came to an end. He nonetheless remained on good terms with her and her family: she must have facilitated the loan to him in 1824 of

Mameluke arms and armour from her cousin Coëtlosquet, whom Delacroix (as his misspelling of the name in his journal suggests) probably did not yet know. These served for the *Massacres of Chios*.³⁴ Since leaving the service of La Maisonfort in October 1823, Soulier had been taken on to manage the property at Beffes, and Delacroix thus continued to call on the family to obtain news of his friend.³⁵ Writing to Soulier from London in 1825 he asks to be remembered to them, and adds this discreet compliment to his old flame: 'You can tell Mme de Pron that French women are unequalled when it comes to charm'.³⁶

The family seems to have invented ways to combine Soulier's new job at Beffes with his talents as a painter. 'Although I don't really understand why you are sacrificing your future fortunes to your arabesque decorations for the General, you are right to stick to it if you are enjoying it', Delacroix wrote to him on 21st April 1826:³⁷ indeed, one of Soulier's tasks, or pastimes, was to decorate some of the château's walls. Two months later, as we have seen, Delacroix visited him there and began the *Still life with lobsters*. In 1939 André Joubin published three watercolours, which he identified as self-portraits by Delacroix coming from an album he called '*album de Beffes*'; he did not give the whereabouts of the album or provide any details about it.³⁸ One of the watercolours carried the caption '*Eugène Delacroix peignant les fresques de la chambre de Mme de Pron*', and represented a young man seated on the floor, holding a palette and painting the walls in the third Pompeian style: a female dancer occupies the centre of the fresco and the painter is working on the surrounding arabesques (Fig. 10). Arabesques also cover a door in the corner, above which a painted overdoor is visible; through the window a rooftop and the greenery of a park can be seen. The painter scarcely resembles Delacroix, and Joubin gave no explanation for the picture.

In fact the album, recently rediscovered, belonged to Mme de Pron: the name 'Louise de la Maisonfort' is embossed in gold on the front cover and 'Beffes' likewise on the back cover. It measures 24.8 by 30.35 cm. and contains forty-one folios, onto thirty-eight of which pictures of varying sizes, with captions, have been mounted. Where Joubin saw it is unknown; it was acquired in Stockholm by the present owners in the summer of 1991. The place-name led them to the château, where restoration works in 1970 had indeed uncovered, in the current dining room, frescos corresponding to the one in the album (Figs. 11 and 12). While the caption may not be exactly contemporary with the execution of the watercolour itself, it cannot date from much later, since Mme de Pron died in 1842 and few surviving her would even have known about the episode in question.³⁹ The writing matches that of the captions to the other pictures in the album, some of which are dated 1836, providing a fairly secure *terminus post quem*.

²⁹ Birth certificate, Archives de Paris, 2e arrondissement (ancien), 15th February 1823.

³⁰ 'Testament de Mr le comte de Coëtlosquet'; Paris, Archives nationales, Minutier central, Etude XLVII, 24th January 1836.

³¹ Death certificate, Couilly, Seine-et-Marne, in 'Acte de notoriété concernant Charles-Louis dit Dubois', 16th January 1843; Paris, Archives nationales, Minutier central, Etude CXIII/938. One wonders whether the lapse of a year between the death and the affidavit had anything to do with the fact that Mme de Pron herself died during this period, on 4th September 1842. The declarations were made by the guardian, Jean-Antoine Audibert, and by Coëtlosquet's executor, baron Michel de Trétagne, the military doctor and art collector who, incidentally, later owned several paintings by Delacroix (J181, J386 and J399).

³² The timing of the birth indicates that the child would not have been fathered by either Soulier, who was away in Italy, or Delacroix, whose relations with Mme de Pron in May 1822 were still very formal.

³³ See document cited at note 30 above.

³⁴ See also *Study of Turkish arms*, J27.

³⁵ See Joubin, I, pp. 172–73, 31st January 1826.

³⁶ 'Tu diras à Mme de Pron que les Françaises n'ont pas d'égaux pour la grâce'; *ibid.*, I, p. 159, 6th June 1825. The name was misread and added to by Joubin as 'Ron[cherolles]', then 'corrected' to 'Provenchères' (*ibid.*, V, p. 273); see Paris, Bibliothèque centrale des Musées nationaux, MS 0540 (03).

³⁷ 'Quoique je ne comprende pas bien pourquoi tu sacrifies ton sort futur à ta décoration en arabesques du général, tu as raison de t'y tenir si cela t'amuse'; Joubin, I, p. 178.

³⁸ *Idem*: 'Delacroix vu par lui-même', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 6/21 (1939), pp. 305–18.

³⁹ Her brother Max, who died in 1848, her mother, who died in 1849, and Soulier himself, who lost touch with her after 1831, could not have written the captions.

⁴⁰ The consistency of the handwriting in the captions indicates that they were all written on or after the latest date of 1836. Thus, either '1808' refers to the view rather



17. Detail of a lion. 1826. Fresco, 13 by 20 cm. East wall, dining room, château de Beffes.



18. Detail of a charioteer and quadriga. 1826. Fresco, 13 by 20 cm. North wall, dining room, château de Beffes.



19. Detail of a warrior riding side-saddle. 1826. Fresco, 13 by 20 cm. East wall, dining room, château de Beffes.



20. Detail of a human-headed bull. 1826. Fresco, 13 by 20 cm. East wall, dining room, château de Beffes.

The album contains two series of images. The first fourteen are views of the château and surrounding countryside, and may be by Mme de Pron herself: nine are dated 1836, two are dated 1808 and the others are undated.⁴⁰ One of them, a view of the countryside from the terrace, confirms that the landscape behind Delacroix's *Still life with lobsters* is indeed that of Beffes. Following these are twenty-four undated watercolours, including the three published by Joubin as by Delacroix, and in a different style altogether from the topographical views. They depict comical scenes of daily life at Beffes and feature the administrator of the property, referred to as 'Son Excellence', a painter, guitar-player and lover of the fine arts: this is probably Soulier, who was an amateur painter and, as we know from two lost portraits by Delacroix, played the guitar.⁴¹ He is surely the author of these watercolours too; their style is very different from Delacroix's muscular graphic style. One carries the title '*Le Courier beffois. Journal hebdomadaire*', and an allusion to the 'delightful beffois journal' in a letter from Coëtlosquet to Soulier

suggests that they may have originally been sent to the General in Paris as a periodic 'report' of happenings in Beffes.⁴²

As the allusion to the 'General's arabesques' in Delacroix's letter suggests, the wall-paintings, like the pictures in the album, are almost certainly by Soulier, whose work Delacroix held in high regard all his life.⁴³ These very accomplished paintings are based on the famous 'Dancers of Herculaneum', frescos of Bacchants from the so-called Villa of Cicero in Pompeii, which were exhibited in the Naples Museum and which had become, in tapestries, porcelain and architectural ornament, one of the most widespread decorative motifs of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴⁴ These were reproduced in *Le Antichità di Ercolano*, which was a primary source for painters, Delacroix included, throughout the decades following its publication in nine volumes from 1755 to 1792; but Soulier may have been inspired by the originals, which he would have seen during his stay in Naples from July 1821 to May 1822.⁴⁵

than to the execution of the watercolour (being drawn, for example, from an earlier picture), or the captions were added, in 1836 or after, to old drawings.

⁴¹ J[L]73; A. Robaut: *L'Œuvre complet de Eugène Delacroix. Peintures, dessins, gravures, lithographies*, Paris 1885, no.63; see also J[L]74. In a letter of 24th November 1820, which, despite its early date, may be relevant, Delacroix refers to Soulier as 'votre future Excellence' (Joubin, I, p.98), perhaps referring to his diplomatic career.

⁴² Letter of 22nd October 1825; included in sale cited at note 8 above. In a letter of 29th June 1826 – thus just after Delacroix's visit – Coëtlosquet writes to Soulier: 'I received your caricature'; *ibid.*

⁴³ 'Chez Leblond le soir. Il m'a montré des aquarelles du temps de nos soirées. J'ai été étonné de celles de Soulier. Elles [font toutes une impression sur l'imagination bien supérieure à celle que font les Fielding]'; Hannoosh, I, 15th March 1847. The Fielding brothers – Copley, Thales, Newton, Frederick and Theodore – were among the foremost watercolourists of the day; see M.R. Pointon: *The Bonington Circle: English Watercolour and*

Anglo-French Landscape, 1790–1855, Brighton 1985.

⁴⁴ A. de Jorio: *Musée Royal Bourbon, Guide pour la galerie des peintures anciennes par le chanoine De Jorio*, 2nd ed., Naples 1830, p.23. On the popularity of the 'Dancers' as a motif, see M.-N. Pinot de Villechenon *et al.*: *Ercolano e Pompei, gli affreschi nelle illustrazioni neoclassiche dell'album delle 'Peintures d'Herculaneum' conservato al Louvre*, Milan 2000, p.75; and V.M. Stroka: 'Pompeii', section IV, in J. Turner, ed.: *The Dictionary of Art*, London and New York 1996, XXV, pp.203–05.

⁴⁵ Delacroix had made numerous drawings after the *Antichità* in 1824 in view of his mural decorations for the dining room of the actor Talma (J94–97); see M. Sérullaz *et al.*: *Musée du Louvre. Département des arts graphiques. Ecole française. Dessins d'Eugène Delacroix*, Paris 1984, II, no.1741, fol.21rff. On the Neo-Pompeian style in France in the 1820s, see P. Prevost Marcilhacy: 'Un Hôtel au goût du jour: L'hôtel de James de Rothschild', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 124 (July–August 1994), pp.35–54; and F. Thiollet and H. Roux: *Nouveau Recueil de menuiserie et de décorations intérieures et extérieures*, Paris 1837.

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21. *Ice-skating*, by Charles-Raymond Soulier. c.1826–29. Watercolour, 17 by 40 cm. (Château de Beffes).



22. *On the terrace at Beffes* (left to right: Max de La Maisonfort?, Coëtlosquet, Mme de Pron, Adrien de Pron?), by Charles-Raymond Soulier. c.1826–29. Watercolour, 17 by 36 cm. (Château de Beffes).

The north wall (Fig. 11) features a dancer dressed in yellowish-gold, wearing a crown of flowers and ivy and holding a pair of cymbals: the image is based on a dancing Bacchant (Fig. 13; Naples inv.9297), though it is in reverse, is differently coloured and has the added detail of a white chemise rather than the exposed breast of the original. The dancer on the east wall (Fig. 12) is inspired by another Bacchant (Fig. 14; Naples inv.9295), with differences of detail (the girdle, the gesture of the left arm, the jewellery, the hairstyle and the mirror and snake). The wall-painting represented in Mme de Pron's album (Fig. 10) has not been uncovered, and, judging from the location of the window and door in the picture, would have been on the north wall of what is now an adjacent room, the original room having been divided late in the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ From the sketchily drawn image visible in the album, it may have been based on another part of Naples inv.9295 (Fig. 15), once again with differences of detail, for example, the position of the feet, the colour of the drapery – red in the album versus diaphanous blue in the original – and the lack of drapery around the head in the album.

The architectural surrounds freely re-use common patterns derived from the ancient and Renaissance traditions of grotesque and arabesque decoration. In addition to paintings from Pompeii and Herculaneum, the most celebrated example was the Vatican Logge, themselves based on the Domus Aurea in Rome.⁴⁷ Soulier

⁴⁶ The existence of a wall-painting in this location was noted at the time of the 1970 works.

⁴⁷ N. Dacos: *La Découverte de la Domus Aurea et la formation des grotesques à la Renaissance*, London 1969, pp.64 and 107–13.

⁴⁸ Drawing in Paris, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, fonds Cl. Roger-Marx, carton 120, autog. 1397/10, late 1839 or early 1840. See also *Le Antichità di Ercolano*, 8, pl.LXXII; and 4, pl.LXVII, for a similar painted motif.

⁴⁹ For the Ara Massima, see K. Stemmer: *Casa dell'Ara Massima*, VI, *Häuser in Pompeji*, Munich 1992, west wall of Atrium B. For the Vatican Logge, see N. Dacos:



23. *Beauty and the beast* (Mme de Pron), by Charles-Raymond Soulier. c.1826–29. Watercolour, 17 by 20 cm. (Château de Beffes).



24. *Horse-back riding* (left to right: Soulier?, Coëtlosquet, Mme de Pron), by Charles-Raymond Soulier. c.1826–29. Watercolour, 17 by 25 cm. (Château de Beffes).



25. *L'abbé Casse, missionnaire, prêchant devant le calife Homard*, by Charles-Raymond Soulier. c.1826–29. Watercolour, 17 by 26 cm. (Château de Beffes).

would have had ample occasion to view these works along with others of a similar type, such as Pintoricchio's arabesques in S. Maria del Popolo. In the Beffes paintings, the border consists of two painted 'pilasters' enclosed within painted candelabra-style columns made to look like carved wood. The latter have the 'ear-of-corn' pattern common to candelabra and to paintings of them, from Pompeii and Herculaneum, which, as an unpublished drawing shows, Delacroix himself considered using in the Palais Bourbon library (Fig. 16).⁴⁸ At the bottom of each 'pilaster' is a large terracotta vase filled with flowers, out of which climbs the arabesque. While these too have ancient and Renaissance

Le Logge di Raffaello. Maestro e bottega di fronte all'antico, Rome 1977.

⁵⁰ For Delacroix's lithograph, see L. Delteil: *Delacroix. The Graphic Work. A Catalogue Raisonné*, transl. and rev. S. Strauber, San Francisco 1997, no.44. The image is modelled on a silver drachma from Miletus; see D. Gérin: 'La Source des lithographies de "médailles" d'Eugène Delacroix', *Nouvelles de l'estampe* 157 (March 1998), pp.12–21.

⁵¹ Delteil, *op. cit.* (note 50), no.45, after a coin from Syracuse; no.46, after a coin from Celeris; no.46, after a coin from Naples; see also Gérin, *op. cit.* (note 50), p.21.

⁵² This was defined as a billiard room in an inventory from 1845, when the château

precedents, such as the House of the Ara Massima at Pompeii, or pilasters IX, XII and XIII of the Vatican Loggia, they are more indebted to flower-painting, being luxuriant bouquets.⁴⁹ Dolphins, birds, a monkey, a snail, goldfish in a bowl, a soldier, a girl with a mirror and various insects grace the colourful curling tendrils, fronds and flowers. At regular intervals, small insets punctuate the arabesque with figural depictions such as a charioteer and quadriga, a camel with palm tree and pyramid, a human-headed bull, a mask, a warrior on horseback and a lion (Fig.17). A floral garland overhangs the top and, below the bottom frame, the traces of a painted masonry-pattern like the second Pompeian style are visible.

While style and documentary evidence indicate that Soulier is the probable author of these paintings, some elements suggest that Delacroix may have lent his friend a hand, at least in design and conception, during his visit to Beffes in June 1826. Some of the small insets depict the same images as Delacroix's lithographs of ancient coins, published in 1825: the lion looking back at the star is the same.⁵⁰ Three other insets, based on Delacroix's lithographs, are the quadriga (Fig.18); the warrior riding side-saddle (Fig.19); and the human-headed bull, or river-god Acheloo (Fig.20).⁵¹ The paintings are heavier in style than the vigorous drawing that makes the lithographs so remarkable, so either Soulier was inspired by them, or Delacroix gave him some moderate assistance, consistent with the caption to the picture in Mme de Pron's album.

In the context of Delacroix's Beffes-inspired *Still life with lobsters*, another set of paintings from the château is suggestive. At an unknown date, a long frieze of finely drawn caricatures, coloured in watercolour and measuring approximately 17 cm. by 17.5 m., was installed in a room on the second floor. Family tradition placed its original location in a large room on the ground floor, which had been the main salon.⁵² Much of the frieze is intact, but some pieces have been damaged or lost. It consists of several separate series of continuous segments, complete with captions and, in some cases, titles. The caricatures are very skilful, in a style reminiscent of Rowlandson, Cruikshank, Grandville and English sporting artists such as Henry Alken (references in English and to the English appear as well). They represent scenes of country life in Beffes, scenes at the Coëtlosquet residence in Paris and caricatures with jokes and puns, some of which are obscure (Figs.21–24). Coëtlosquet, Mme de Pron, the marquise de La Maisonfort and possibly Adrien, the marquis and Soulier figure in these scenes.

As with the wall decorations and the comical images from Mme de Pron's album, these caricatures can probably be attributed to Soulier, who had grown up in London and been trained by the English artist Copley Fielding.⁵³ Individual sequences refer to dates from 1826 to 1829; the punning '*Guillaume Tel qu'il est représenté devant MM. les habitués ordinaires de l'opéra*' has to have been executed after the premiere of Rossini's opera at the Salle Le Pelletier, Paris, on 5th August 1829; a reference to the

was sold by the dowager marquise de La Maisonfort to the ancestors of the current owners; in Coëtlosquet's posthumous inventory it is called '*le salon*' and contained a billiard table (see document cited at note 9 above).

⁵³ It should be noted that a paint-box is listed in Coëtlosquet's posthumous inventory from Beffes; *ibid.*, no.25.

⁵⁴ The extant letters, included in the sale cited at note 8 above, from Coëtlosquet to Soulier, run from 1824 to 1831.

⁵⁵ The so-called '*album de la Saint-Sylvestre*', recording the annual New Year's Eve festivities of Delacroix and his friends Pierret and Guillemardet, has numerous examples;



26. *L'Ours et le pacha*, by Charles-Raymond Soulier. c.1826–29. Watercolour, 17 by 54 cm. (Château de Beffes).



27. *L'Ours et le pacha*, by Charles-Raymond Soulier. c.1826–29. Watercolour, 17 by 40 cm. (Château de Beffes).

Navarino affair has to be after 29th October 1827; other dates can be had from a mention of the Treaty of London (6th July 1827), relating to Turkey's role in Greece, and from a possible allusion to the ordinances of 16th June 1828 removing a number of schools from Jesuit control. Soulier may have done some of these during a stay in Beffes from August to October 1828, but it is unknown when he was there in the following two years – perhaps in the same period in 1829 or 1830. His marriage in July 1831 soon brought the chapter of his visits to Beffes, and his relations with its inhabitants, to a close.⁵⁴

Two series within the caricatural frieze relate to Delacroix's *Still life*. The first depicts a woodcock (*bécasse*) dressed as an abbot preaching to an enormous lobster (*homard*) seated like a pasha on a throne of cushions, smoking a narghile and surrounded by courtiers in Oriental dress (Fig.25). The caption reads '*L'abbé Casse, missionnaire, prêchant devant le calife Homard*', punning on both '*l'abbé Casse/la bécasse*' and '*Homard/Omar*'. The former type of wordplay had been popularised by the marquis de Bièvre in his *Lettre à la comtesse Tation* of 1770 and was common during the Restoration; it was used frequently in Delacroix's circle, as an album in the Louvre attests.⁵⁵ The caption ends, as a kind of signature, with a prominent image of a lobster. The Oriental scene can be explained by one which precedes it, entitled '*L'Ours et le pacha*' (Figs.26 and 27), referring to a popular vaudeville from 1820 about a pasha whose favourite bear has died, and whose councillor, Marécot, seeks to divert him with a new interest.⁵⁶ The caption – '*Un poisson de mer! Prenez mon ours!!!*' – is from the play, as are the dancing and harp-playing bears. In the caricature from the frieze, the pasha figure, corresponding to the lobster in

Sérullaz *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 45) no.1739, pp.47–50. The same type of pun dominates the caricature in the Beffes frieze: '*L'abbé Daine et l'abbé Tise rencontrent l'abbé Rlue*'. For the popularity of such puns in caricature, see Champfleury [J. Fleury-Husson]: *Histoire de la caricature sous la République, l'Empire et la Restauration*, Paris 1877, p.114.

⁵⁶ The caption reads: '*Un poisson de mer! Prenez mon ours!!! Ballet composé par le grand chambellan Maréco*'. *L'Ours et le pacha*, a *folie-vaudeville* by Scribe and Xavier, was first performed at the Théâtre des Variétés, Paris, on 10th February 1820; a new edition of the text was published in 1826. The phrase '*prenez mon ours*' subsequently entered the language to refer to a play that was not performed.

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28. Portrait of Charles-Yves-César-Cyr, comte de Coëtlosquet, by Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun. Salon of 1824. Canvas. (Private collection).



29. Young woman in a large hat, by Eugène Delacroix. c.1826. Canvas, 27 by 22 cm. (Formerly Musée du Louvre, Paris; present whereabouts unknown).

the later sequence, is an image of Coëtlosquet such as we know him from other caricatures (Figs.22 and 24) and from contemporary portraits, notably Vigée-Lebrun's, exhibited at the 1824 Salon (Fig.28).

Thus there appears to have been an acknowledged association between Coëtlosquet and the figure of a lobster, which may explain this most striking oddity of Delacroix's still life. The painting was almost certainly executed before the caricature, which therefore did not inspire it; but the private joke to which the caricature bears witness surely explains Delacroix's choice for his still life. This, as he wrote in the letter quoted at the start of this article, would be 'amusing', but what the joke was is unclear. While Coëtlosquet was a senior administrator in the Restoration government, and Delacroix had made in 1822 a caricature of crayfish entitled '*Les Ecrevisses à Longchamps*', which lampooned the forces of reaction, the lobster is unlikely to be a commentary on the General's political inclinations: the caricature decorated his house, the still life was done for him and it is implausible that Delacroix would have aimed such a joke at someone he constantly referred to as '*le bon général*', and who was his host.⁵⁷ Is it an allusion to his Breton origins?⁵⁸ To his ruddy colouring, as in the expression '*rouge comme un homard*'? Or simply a pun on 'Omar' of which he was fond? Whatever the source of Coëtlosquet's association with lobsters, it seems to have inspired both the lobsters of Delacroix's painting and those of the caricatures.

⁵⁷ Joubin, I, pp.180 and 218. *Les Ecrevisses à Longchamps*; Delteil, *op. cit.* (note 50), no.37, was published in *Le Miroir* (4th April 1822), accompanied by a text (not by Delacroix) satirising '*des gens qui ne s'élèvent jamais et vont habituellement à reculons*', notably censorship and the conservative daily *La Quotidienne*. Articles in other issues (3rd and 5th March 1822) created a new honorific Order in the Academy of Ignoramuses and named its degrees according to different types of shellfish – crayfish, crab, lobster, shrimp. On the popularity of the crayfish, see J. Grand-Carteret: *Les Mœurs et la caricature en France*, Paris 1888, p.185, and figs.34 and 106.

⁵⁸ Coëtlosquet was born in Morlaix and the family came originally from the diocese of Saint-Pol-de-Léon; see Kerviler, *op. cit.* (note 16), pp.5 and 13.

⁵⁹ The pipe was sent through the intermediary of General Joseph Rossetti (1776–1840), a friend of Coëtlosquet's from their days in the Russian campaign. In a letter to Drovetti of 19th December 1827, Rossetti sends greetings from Coëtlosquet, Max de La Maisonfort and Mme de Pron, and continues: '*Je te remercie de bien bon cœur du café et de la pipe que tu m'annonces, j'en disposerai d'une partie selon tes désirs et d'une*

The Oriental theme also seems to have had personal associations. Coëtlosquet was a good friend of the French Consul-General at Alexandria, Bernardino Drovetti, who, in December 1827, sent him and Mme de Pron some coffee and a pipe – perhaps the narghile represented in the caricature.⁵⁹ Moreover, in a letter of 9th December 1828, Coëtlosquet writes to Drovetti to ask whether the consul could send some Egyptian fabric and furnishings for an 'Egyptian room', which he and Mme de Pron wished to establish in their country house for her brother Max, who had a taste for all things Oriental, especially Egyptian.⁶⁰ This taste may account for the Oriental themes of '*L'Ours et le pacha*' and the sequence on the '*calife Homard*' in the caricatures, although the pasha resembles Coëtlosquet and not Max de La Maisonfort. In addition, Turkish-inspired puns animate a portion of the frieze's carnival sequence, in which a 'Turkish' figure says to a 'Greek': '*Je te ferai une avanie! Je t'enverrai à la Porte!*', with the caption indicating '*Traité du 6 juillet*'. This refers to the Treaty of London of 6th July 1827 between France, England and Russia relating to Turkey's role in Greece. '*Avanie*', meaning a slap in the face, originally referred to a tax inflicted on Christians by the Turks; and '*je t'enverrai à la Porte*' means both 'I'll throw you out' and 'I'll send you to the [Sublime] Porte'.

The second of the caricatures pertinent to this story is a fragment, the rest of which has been lost and which is obviously out

autre selon les miens, mais en ton nom; j'en ai déjà prévenu le G[énéral] Coëtlosquet et Madame de P . . .'; B. Drovetti: *Epistolario*, ed. S. Curto and L. Donatelli, Milan 1985, p.527. Coëtlosquet is misidentified in the edition, his name mistranscribed ('Collosquet', 'Coestorquet'), but this was corrected in a review of *Epistolario* by R.J. Ridley: *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 77 (1991), p.241.

⁶⁰ '*Notre ami commun le bon général Rossetti m'a laissé espérer que vous voudriez bien nous aider à satisfaire une idée que Madame de Pron et moi avons eu[e], de faire à la campagne un Cabinet égyptien pour son frère qui a le goût le plus prononcé pour tout ce qui est oriental, et surtout de votre beau pays. [. . .] Nous désirons que les étoffes ayent le mérite (quelques laides qu'elles puissent être du reste) d'être celles les plus en usage dans le pays, ainsi que les deux ou quatre petits meubles bien nationaux, fussent-ils encore inutiles à nos usages. Ce que nous souhaitions avant tout c'est le cachet du pays*'; see Drovetti, *op. cit.* (note 59), p.578. Max had served in the army of the Danube fighting the Turks under Prince Bagration in 1809; marquis de La Maisonfort, *op. cit.* (note 18), p.xviii.

⁶¹ Johnson suggests that, because the woman in J89 wears seventeenth-century dress,



30. *Still life with lobsters*, by Charles-Raymond Soulier. c.1826–29. Watercolour, 17 by 10 cm. (Château de Beffes).

of place in the sequence as now constituted (Fig.30). On the right, now cut off, are the traces of a painter holding a palette and tumbling head-first from a ladder. A black cap of the type 'Soulier' wears in the pictures from Mme de Pron's album has fallen from the painter's head and lies on the floor. Behind him, stacked against the wall, are two paintings: in the foreground, a caricatural version of the *Still life with lobsters*, complete with lizard; in the background, a portrait of a woman wearing a large hat. While the still life is clearly recognisable as Delacroix's, the portrait raises an intriguing question, for Delacroix indeed painted a portrait of a *Young woman in a large hat* which has been missing from the Louvre since at least the Second World War (J89), and whose sitter has never been properly identified (Fig.29). Was she Mme de Pron? For the moment, this question

she may be an actress, but this was in fact common in Restoration portraiture; see J. Baillio: exh. cat. *Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun*, Fort Worth (Kimbell Art Museum) 1982, no.56, p.128. She has been incorrectly identified as George Sand, Mme de Conflans and Mme Dalton (see J89).

⁶² 'Inventaire après décès de Mr le comte de Coëtlosquet'; Paris, Archives nationales, Minutier central, Etude XLVII, 29th January 1836.

⁶³ Maximilien de La Maisonfort, posthumous inventory (private collection), nos.2 and 14.

⁶⁴ Archives départementales du Cher, E13.794, 18th October 1842, listed as being in the library.

⁶⁵ 'J'entends que ma mère [...] conserve l'usufruit pendant sa vie, des dépendances qui m'appartiendraient [...] de la terre de Beffes, ainsi que des meubles meublants, tableaux, portraits, armures [...] que je laisserai au château de Beffes ou à Paris'; Archives départementales du Cher, Archives notariales, notaire Naudin. Mme de Pron's possessions were later inherited by her son Adrien once the dowager marquise de La Maisonfort died in

must remain unanswered but, if we allow for the caricatural nature of the frieze, the likeness in the face and the hat is not entirely implausible (see Fig.23).⁶¹

General Coëtlosquet died in Paris on 23rd January 1836. The inventory of his Paris residence lists a 'wool cloak with a tartan lining', which may account for the Scottish plaid which Delacroix included in the still life.⁶² The inventory of his rooms in the château at Beffes lists 'two large oil-paintings representing landscapes', one of which may be the *Still life with lobsters*; and two trophies of arms, one French and the other foreign, the latter of which may be the ones borrowed by Delacroix through the intermediary of Mme de Pron in 1824.⁶³ Both the paintings and the trophies, inherited by Mme de Pron, turn up in her own posthumous inventory in 1842.⁶⁴ Her possessions passed with rights of usufruct, the paintings included, to her mother.⁶⁵ It is likely that, when the château was sold in 1845 and the dowager marquise de La Maisonfort moved to smaller accommodation in Nevers, the *Still life with lobsters* was retrieved by her son, Mme de Pron's brother Max, now marquis de La Maisonfort, for after his death on 25th March 1848 it appears in the inventory of his residence.⁶⁶ Max bequeathed his possessions to his friend Joséphine Delacouis who, having received her inheritance by early 1850, must have sold the *Still life with lobsters* almost immediately. This is the period when Delacroix would have seen it, reporting to Soulier on 23rd March 1850 that he had been shown it a month or two before, the painting being for sale because 'the poor marquis [had] died in his turn'.⁶⁷ It was bought by the painter Philippe Rousseau, who sold it in June 1853 to Adolphe Moreau.⁶⁸

It is well known that Delacroix's 'betrayal' of Soulier was repaid in kind by Soulier's apparent adventure with Delacroix's lover Mme Dalton in 1829–30. Away in Normandy visiting relatives, Delacroix writes how pleased he is to learn that Soulier has gone to see Mme Dalton, and asks him to 'give her a kiss from me [...] and encourage her in her painting' – an order of which Soulier, to use Alfred Dupont's words, acquitted himself only too well.⁶⁹ All these farces came to an end with the Revolution of 1830: the July Monarchy was a more staid time for all and a distinctly more unhappy time for some. With the arrival of the new regime, Coëtlosquet, no longer in royal favour, retired to Beffes, took up agriculture and died in 1836. Mme de Pron also retired to Beffes, where she died on 4th September 1842, exhorting her grandson 'never to forget his poor grandmother who was so unhappy', and pardoning her son for all the sorrows he had caused her.⁷⁰ Adrien had entered the military in 1827 as a member of the King's Bodyguards, had risen to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the first regiment of light infantry and in 1846 was imprisoned for financial forgery;⁷¹ he had married in 1831 and

1849; but as Adrien was in prison at the time, he could not claim his inheritance.

⁶⁶ See document cited at note 9 above, no.24; 'Un grand tableau d'Eugène Delacroix représentant du gibier et des accessoires de chasse dans un cadre de bois doré'.

⁶⁷ 'Le pauvre marquis est mort à son tour et le tableau était à vendre'; Joubin, III, p.11.

⁶⁸ See Lachin and Rosenberg *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp.52–53, where Moreau-Nélaton's family memoir is cited, correcting the original date of 1843 given in his *Delacroix raconté par lui-même*, *op. cit.* (note 3), I, p.85.

⁶⁹ Joubin, I, p.244, 28th October 1829; and the sequel in E. Delacroix: *Lettres intimes*, ed. A. Dupont, Paris 1954, repr. 1995, pp.169–71.

⁷⁰ See note 65 above.

⁷¹ *Annuaire militaire*, 1828. Adrien was imprisoned for 'faux en écriture de commerce et usage' from 5th December 1846 to 4th May 1851; in the prison register (Grande Roquette, registre d'écrou 2410/20, 30th September 1846–10th June 1847, no.233), he is listed as residing in Pesth, Hungary: we thank M. Thierry Couture for this information.

DELACROIX, 'J.' AND 'STILL LIFE WITH LOBSTERS'

had a son who was raised by Mme de Pron and who died three days after she did.⁷² As we have seen, Max died in 1848 and the dowager marquise de La Maisonfort, having outlived her husband, daughter, son, nephew and great-grandson, died on 17th May 1849.

For his part, Soulier married in 1831 the daughter of a minor aristocrat and lived a settled life in the provinces, spending his career in the canals administration. He died on 23rd December

Appendix

1. Unpublished correspondence between Delacroix and Mme de Pron (sale, Galerie Koller, Geneva, 12th November 2006, lot 1613).

a. Letter from Delacroix to Mme de Pron

[Wednesday 5th November 1823]

Dis-moi, amie chérie, que tu ne regrettes pas les instants de bonheur que tu donnes à ton ami; dis-moi que tu ne m'en veux pas. Je rentre le soir tout plein de bonheur, et ta jolie petite mine boudeuse, je n'en veux pas croire un mot pour passer une bonne nuit complète. Aurais-tu eu le courage d'en garder rancune en rentrant dans ta petite chambre adorée, et où reposent toutes tes grâces dans ce lit que mon amour jaloux ne peut partager? Aime-moi comme je t'aime, comme l'amour veut qu'on aime. En ôter une parcelle de ses divines jouissances, c'est le tromper, c'est aller contre son vœu. Tu le sais, c'est un tyran: il veut tout, et quand il a tout, il voudrait l'impossible. Je voudrais circuler avec ton sang dans les veines et aller dans ton cœur, y voir si je l'occupe tout entier. Dis, puis-je l'occuper et te mérit[er]ais-je?

Encore une fois, ne refuse rien au tendre amour. Pourquoi est-ce que je baise encore mon mouchoir qui t'a touchée tout à l'heure, qui t'a touchée partout! Oseras-tu dire que c'est folie: de toi que ne dois-je pas aimer? Quel moment que celui où il faut quitter ce qu'on aime! Quelle solitude jusqu'à ce qu'on retrouve et qu'on presse sa main! Demain je te verrai. Que tes yeux me disent que tu m'aimes. N'est-ce pas! Demain soir tu m'écriras pour que je lise de toi vendredi, dans cette maudite journée qui aurait dû être divine. Que je reçoive quelque chose et bien long encore de toi, amour, pendant ce jour-là qui me paraîtra néfaste. Adieu, aime-moi comme je t'aime. Me coucher! C'est me séparer de toi une seconde fois, car ton souvenir est encore avec moi, et qui sait ce que m'apportera la vague des songes. Sera-ce ta douce image? Ou ma triste imagination enfantera-t-elle encore des monstres horribles? Il est tard, je ne puis encore renoncer au souvenir de ma soirée. Toi, tu dors sans doute. Si je pouvais t'occuper en songe. Adieu, il le faut à la fin. Amour, aime-moi. merc[redi] 5 nov[embre].

b. Summary of undated letter

Le peintre clame son désespoir, doute de l'amour de Julie [sic], en souffre et veut être à tout prix rassuré [. . .] 'Oh! l'esprit! je le déteste s'il sert à flétrir l'âme et à la dessécher. Dis-moi que non, amour. Dis le moi de toutes les manières, trompe-moi si tu veux, je te croirai, je veux tant te croire et j'en ai si besoin. Mais quelle folie! quel roman que notre vie et que nos cœurs [. . .] Adieu amour, as-tu le cœur d'autrefois? Dis'.

2. Letters from Mme de Pron (all unsigned) to Delacroix (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Research Institute).

a. Monsieur Eugène De la Croix, rue de la Planche no.22, fg St Germain, Paris⁷⁴

[postmark, 3rd June 1822]

J'ai reçu, Monsieur, votre aimable billet jeudi à 9h. du matin. Serez-vous libre, j'aurai l'honneur d'aller chez vous, et vous supplie d'avance d'agréer mes sincères et empressés remerciements. Lundi.

[For Delacroix's draft replies, see Hannoosh, I, for Sunday 27th October 1822; Tuesday 15th April 1823; Friday 16th May 1823; Wednesday 5th November 1823; Sunday 9th November 1823; and Monday 10th November 1823. On the latter date, Delacroix writes to Mme de Pron, who has evidently told him that Thursday 13th November, will be their last afternoon. He begs her to come to see him the next day. Her response follows:]

b. Monsieur Eugène De La Croix, rue de Grenelle St Germain, no.118, fb St Germain, Paris.

[Monday 10th November 1823]

⁷² Adrien had married Amélie Gützt on 23rd June 1831 (we thank Eric Bertin for this date). Their son, also named Adrien, was born in October 1833 (he was 8 years and 11 months old when he died on 7th September 1842); Archives départementales du Cher, archives notariales, notaire Naudin. Widowed, Adrien père remarried in 1853. Horace Raison, the friend of Soulier and Delacroix, was a witness at the ceremony; Paris, marriage register, Eglise Saint-Roch, Archives de Paris, D6 J1620, 14th July 1853.

1866, three years after his friend Delacroix, who during his lifetime had never ceased, in his letters, to recall the 'good old days' of their carefree youth, their diversions, their outpourings of feeling and – a recurrent term – the 'happy insouciance' of that time.⁷³ The *Still life with lobsters*, the pages about 'J.' from his journal and the album, wall-paintings and caricatures from Beffes preserve the traces of some of that frivolity, and provide new insight into Delacroix's life and work during the 1820s.

Je tiens votre lettre d'une main et j'écris de l'autre. Il ne s'est pas encore écoulé [sic] 2 minutes depuis que je ne la possède, et j'obéis à vos ordres, cher Eugène. Que cela est facile d'obéir quand on vous demande ce que vous désirez accorder. –J'irai jeudi, avant si je puis, mais bien sûr, bien sûr après vous aurez encore un dimanche, mais seulement peu de temps. Puis après, tout ne sera pas fini, ô non. Je veux de l'amitié bien douce, bien bonne, bien franche, je ne veux pas vous tourmenter. Je veux que vous soyez heureux et que mon âme sache entendre la vôtre, que vos chagrins soient moins pesants partagés par moi. –Vos plaisirs, mon ami, vous m'en parlerez et j'y prendrai part. Adieu, j'écris à la hâte. Adieu.

c. Monsieur Eugène Delacroix, rue des Grès, près la place St Michel, no.16, f. St Germain, Paris.

[postmark, Tuesday 18th November 1823]

Soyez sans inquiétude sur ma santé. J'ai [été] dimanche bien malade, bien sérieusement malade, hier encore. Ce matin je suis mieux mais je garde le lit et ne pourrai pas encore sortir de quelques jours.

Ne m'en voulez pas pour dimanche. Hélas, j'étais bien triste, bien désolée, ayant une fièvre violente et le délire.

Toute ma famille est arrivée hier soir.

Adieu

mardi 4 hr

(on the outside fold, interrupted by the seal: 'J'écrirai aussitôt que je le p[ourrai]')

d. Monsieur Eugène De Lacroix, rue de Grenelle St Germain no.118, f. St Germain, Paris.

vendredi 11 hr [Friday 21st November 1823]

J'ai été bien malade hier mon cher Eugène. Je n'ai pas pu aller au spectacle. Il a fallu me coucher. Si demain, samedi, vous pouvez venir me voir, venez de midi à une heure. Je serai charmée de vous voir et le bien que j'éprouverai me guérira, j'espère.

Il faudra [sic] une charte, il m'en faut une.⁷⁵ Vous voyez que je vous avais dit vrai. – Mon médecin sort d'ici. Il m'ordonne le repos et de garder le lit une partie de la journée. Je vais lui obéir.

Adieu, quand vous serez dans votre abbaÿe,⁷⁶ pensez un peu à une vieille amie qui a pour vous une sincère amitié.

e. Monsieur Eugène de la croix, rue des grès no.16, près, la Place St Michel, Paris

Jeudi soir [postmark, Thursday 11th December 1823]

Vous ignorez à quel point je suis accablée de chagrin. Mon fils est malade au lit pour un mois entier sans bouger et cela par une chute [sic]. Il [est] menacé de l'accident le plus grave. –Plaignez-moi, je le soigne, je le console, et je gémiss toute seule – que de larmes une pauvre mère verse – J'ai été bien malade, bien gravement malade, pas une visite de vous, pas un seul mot. –

Ah, que je suis triste.

Adieu. Si vous vous intéressez aux malheureux j'ai droit à votre souvenir. –Adieu, adieu.

[For Delacroix's response in the *Journal*, see Wednesday 17th December 1823]

f. Monsieur Eugène de Lacroix, rue de Grenelle St Germain, no.118 – f. St Germain, Paris

[Sunday 4th July 1824, postmark 5th July]

J'ai été à votre atelier [sic], Monsieur, sans pouvoir avoir le plaisir de vous voir. Le G^{al} réclame ses armures. Veuillez me les renvoyer, vous serez bien aimable. Vous m'avez promis une visite, venez donc demain lundi de midi à une heure.

Dimanche 10 hr

⁷³ See Joubin, III, p.11 (23rd March 1850); p.177 (10th November 1853); p.348 (6th December 1856); and IV, p.7 (15th January 1858).

⁷⁴ Delacroix had a flat and a studio at this address.

⁷⁵ This enigmatic comment refers to a statement which Delacroix makes in his letter to her of 10th November 1823 (see under this date in Hannoosh, I): 'Vous savez aussi que nous avons des articles à dresser'. It is unclear what this 'charter' was.

⁷⁶ The studio at 16 rue des Grès was a former abbey.