

Territorial Fantasies, Sexual Nuances, and Savage Energy: Orientalism and Tropicality in Eugène Delacroix and Johann Moritz Rugendas

Miguel Ángel Gaete

The University of York

e-mail: magc500@york.ac.uk

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3255-349X>

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ABSTRACT: In 1822, the German Romantic painter Johann Moritz Rugendas undertook his famed three-year journey across Brazil. Later, between 1831 and 1846, encouraged by Alexander von Humboldt and other Romantic artists, he would make a second trip through Mexico and South America. In 1832, Eugène Delacroix started a six-month journey to Spain and North Africa as a part of a diplomatic mission. Both artists profusely translated their travels into words and rich images of tropical America and the Orient. Their paintings and illustrations of remote lands and people became milestones in their respective careers while being prime examples of how Europe viewed and perceived the rest of the world in the nineteenth century. In hindsight, they were not only mere agents and promoters of two crucial aesthetic trends of that time: Orientalism and Tropicality but the embodiment of two ways of seeing and imagining the *Others*. This article places these two artists against each other, contrasting the set of ideas and cultural preconceptions resting behind a sizeable number of paintings, drawings, and illustrations of their Eastern and South American experiences. The central argument is that Tropicality and Orientalism were comparable phenomena based on similar tropes and assumptions. It brings forward recurring themes of Rugendas and Delacroix's works, such as the eroticisation of female bodies and the linkage between South America and the East with everlasting ideas of violence, adventures, and savageness to prove such an equivalence.

KEYWORDS: Romanticism; Delacroix; Rugendas; South America; Orientalism; Tropicality.

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RESUMEN: *Fantasías territoriales, alusiones sexuales y energía salvaje: Orientalismo y Tropicalidad en Eugène Delacroix y Johann Moritz Rugendas.*— El pintor romántico alemán Johann Moritz Rugendas, emprendió su primer afamado viaje a través de Brasil entre 1822 y 1825. Mas tarde, entre 1831 y 1846, incentivado por Alexander von Humboldt y otros pintores románticos, realizó un segundo viaje visitando esta vez México y otros países sudamericanos. En 1832, Eugène Delacroix se embarcó en un viaje de seis meses a través de España y el norte de África como parte de una misión diplomática. Ambos artistas plasmaron profusamente sus viajes en diarios e imágenes sobre Sudamérica y Oriente. Sus pinturas e ilustraciones de tierras remotas y personas exóticas son hitos de sus respectivas carreras, convirtiéndose además en magníficos ejemplos sobre como Europa veía y percibía el resto del mundo en el siglo XIX. De esta manera, estos artistas no fueron solamente agentes y promotores de dos importantes corrientes estéticas de la época, como son el Orientalismo y la Tropicalidad, sino que se convirtieron en la representación de dos maneras de ver y fantasear a los *Otros*. Este artículo contrasta a estos dos artistas y los analiza en relación al conjunto de ideas y preconcepciones culturales que existían detrás de un considerable número de pinturas, dibujos e ilustraciones que ellos realizaron a partir de sus experiencias en Oriente y Sudamérica. El argumento central es que tanto la Tropicalidad como el Orientalismo son fenómenos comparables basados en las mismas convenciones y prejuicios. Para demostrar tal equivalencia, este escrito analizara temas recurrentes en las obras de Rugendas y Delacroix, como la erotización de los cuerpos femeninos y el vínculo entre América del Sur y Oriente con ideas sempiternas de violencia, aventuras y salvajismo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Romanticismo; Delacroix; Rugendas; Sudamérica; Orientalismo; Tropicalidad.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1822 Johann Moritz Rugendas (1802-1858) embarked on a scientific exploration through Brazil hired as an illustrator by Baron von Langsdorff. Rugendas spent three years depicting exotic people, lavish nature, and the otherworldly tropical scenery. He did so by merging a sharp scientific gaze with an aesthetic sensibility inherited from the German Romantic tradition. Six years later, the painter would make a second voyage to America. This time he stayed for a much extended period between 1831 and 1846. Rugendas expressed his profound fascination with the tropical world and South America through hundreds of drawings, sketches, engravings, and colourful paintings. Artworks such as *Paisaje en la selva virgen de Brasil con figuras* (1830) or *La siesta* (1850) are essential to comprehend how, in the nineteenth century, Europe's conception of the continent was predominantly centred on strikingly visual terms, a phenomenon that would come to be known as Tropicality.¹

Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), on the other hand, undertook in 1832 a six-month journey to Spain and North Africa, visiting Morocco, Algiers, and Andalucía.² The outcomes of such an initiatory trip were paintings and drawings of scenes showing his engrossment with the Middle East's people and atmosphere, consolidating his interest in Orientalism. Celebrated paintings such as *Femmes d'Alger* (1834)³ and *Arabian Fantasy* (1833) are splendid examples of Delacroix's Orientalist stage. Subsequently, Rugendas and Delacroix, who met in Paris in 1825, became representatives of two modes of seeing and fantasising about the world beyond Europe in the Romantic Period.

This article explores the strong bonds between Orientalism and Tropicality through Rugendas and Delacroix's encounters with South America and the Orient. It chiefly aims to identify similar responses and equivalent traits in the artworks they fashioned because of their journeys. Therefore, this paper will eschew an exhaustive analysis of the materiality and the assortment of media they employed, focusing instead on interrogating their artworks' *ethos*.⁴ One aspect to examine is the extent to which Rugendas and Delacroix echoed themes, European obsessions, and common tropes associated with both the Romantic imagination and the colonialist view of those territories. Understanding to what degree these artists actively responded to the eroticisation of African and South American people by adhering to views of those places as realms of exoticism, adventures, and wilderness will also be a central concern of this research. Since travelling was a transversal and focal issue for these two artists, this paper shall ask whether journeying and spending long

seasons in South America, as it occurred in the case of Rugendas or imagining the territory spending a brief period in the Orient, as Delacroix did, should be considered a determining factor for understanding the artworks that ensued from such sojourns.

The overarching argument is that a number of Delacroix and Rugendas' artworks produced prior to and following their journeys to South America and Africa share not only formal similarities but comparable ideological positions. This research looks at some of Delacroix and Rugendas' diaries and letters as the first way to elaborate on this hypothesis. Both artists in effect, documented their voyages in words and images. Although unsystematically, Delacroix wrote and drew lengthily about his trip in notebooks and travelogues.⁵ Rugendas was also very prolific and narrated his experience in hundreds of letters and diaries.⁶ His travelogues filled with drawings and notes of all sorts are considered "autobiographical confidences" and "intimate diaries" (Lago, 1960, p. 159).

The second way to expound on this article's main argument entails selecting and comparing some of Rugendas and Delacroix's essential pictorial subjects, such as the harem, kidnappings, wild animals and scenes of violence. In this matter, this paper shall compare some of their most emblematic tropical and Orientalist artworks to find both the convergent and divergent elements. Such analysis will be completed with critical ideas on European Orientalism and Tropicality by scholars such as Eduard Said and David Arnold.

While there have been some investigations over the years on the linkage between Orientalism and Tropicality, scholarship has principally centred on sociological, political and historical aspects. In literature, the particular interest of Romantics in Central and South America has often been compared with the most studied fascination of Europe with the East.⁷ In art history, the different forms in which European Romantic artists engaged with the Orient have drawn considerable attention. There are comprehensive revisions on the British and French artists and writers in the East and their aesthetics. Orientalism in the Victorian era has become a vibrant and independent field of research. A different state is observed in the study of Tropicality. Despite its impact on painting, literature, and other expressions has been deemed undeniable and far-reaching and very often likened to that of Orientalism, only a few publications have treated this topic from an art historical standpoint.⁸ The extent to which Orientalist and Tropicalist artists were part of synchronous events, such as the exploration of the world, the apogee of European expansionism, and the consequent widening of the substantial gap between "them" and "us" in the nineteenth century, is an aspect utterly overlooked by literature (Said, 1978,

p. 327). Acknowledging these correlations would validate studying artists and artworks corresponding to these two aesthetic visions through a comparative method.

Rugendas and Delacroix's relationship has been largely ignored, even when there is factual evidence of several meetings taking place in Paris over the years. There are records and entries in diaries that prove they gathered at least a couple of times in different periods of their careers.⁹ Alexander von Humboldt, a vital figure in the rise of Tropicality, mediated these encounters. When they met for the first time, a penchant for the East was already well settled in Europe.¹⁰ Delacroix and Rugendas frequented the same group of acquaintances and shared their voyage experiences and works. It appears natural then that several French Orientalist artists, as well as others who during their careers had a stop in the oriental fashion, such as François Gérard, Horace Vernet, Jacques Luis David, Richard Bonington, Antoine-Jean Gros and Eugène Delacroix himself, had become Rugendas' primary inspiration and sources of contact with the taste for exotic places (Diener Ojeda, 1992, p. 23). The same could be claimed the other way around. Humboldt and Rugendas became first-hand sources of information on the far New World for French artists. The bonds between Rugendas and French painters began to be forged on his first trip to Brazil. On that occasion, Rugendas established a strong relationship with Jean Baptiste Debret, who also published a three-volume *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil* (Debret, 1834) and the Taunay family. These circumstances certainly fostered Rugendas and Delacroix's classical distinctions between the East and the West.

ORIENTALISM AND TROPICALITY IN CONTEXT

When Johann Moritz Rugendas undertook his first voyage to America in 1822, he was almost an adolescent. His artistic career was just starting, and his experience and acknowledgement in the German scene were scarce (Lago, 1960, pp. 12-13). Eugène Delacroix, on the other hand, travelled to Africa and Spain in 1832 as part of a diplomatic mission together with Charles-Edgar de Mornay. By then, Delacroix was already a famed artist and had painted two of his most celebrated Orientalist paintings: *Massacre at Chios* (1824) and *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827). A new phase in colonialism and expansionism models, besides a renewed political setting boosted by the Industrial Revolution, were some of the main factors that prompted Rugendas and Delacroix's quests. These two events led to an "opening" toward two continents historically connected to Europe: America and Africa. Such cultural awakening, or as some scholars call it, "Europe's planetary consciousness," entailed the rediscovery of those lands describing and categorising them on a scale never seen before (Pratt, 2007, pp. 10-16).

Rugendas and Delacroix's engagement with Tropicality and Orientalism was, in many aspects, triggered by Europe's large-scale opening. There is broad consensus among art historians on the importance of public figures

and fiction during this historical stage and its aesthetic outcomes. A case in point is Alexander von Humboldt, who sparked a renewed curiosity for the tropics and South America and encouraged Rugendas' enterprise in the continent. Rugendas, who was Humboldt's protégé, nourished his eagerness for the tropical world from Humboldt's profoundly influential publications. The explorer, whose books had become the "lens through which much of nineteenth-century Europe saw South America" (Nicholson, 1995, pp. 9-34) conveyed the tropics as a world of "organic richness" and "abundant fertility," indubitably different from the East and Europe (Arnold, 2000).

On the other hand, Napoleon's 1798 Egyptian campaigns stimulated the craze for the Orient in a generation of French artists, including Delacroix (MacKenzie, 1998, p. 50). Edward Said has summarised Napoleon's contribution to Orientalism as follows:

The Napoleonic expedition, with its great collective monument of erudition, the description of *L'Égypte*, provided a scene or setting for Orientalism, since Egypt and subsequently the other Islamic lands were viewed as the live province, the laboratory, the theatre of effective Western knowledge about the Orient (Said, 2003, pp. 42-43).

Additionally, popular narratives stirred the zeal for these two exotic surroundings. In this regard, *The Arabian Nights*, as well as Lord Byron's plays, were decisive for Delacroix's passion for the Orient world (Noon and Riopelle, 2015, p. 25). J.F. Campe's rewrite of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* had a tantamount impact on generations of German travellers in America (Zantop, 1997, p. 13).

Someone looking for the first time at Johann Moritz Rugendas' *Paisaje en la selva virgen de Brasil, con figuras* (Fig. 1) might read it both as a colourful and very accurate catalogue of the tropical life and as a romantic representation of something that goes beyond a dazzling landscape. This painting epitomises a whole idea of the tropics. On the one hand, it gathers the view of its people as humans living in utter communion with nature, in a state of wilderness, as though it were a window to a bygone era. At the same time, it shows a territory whose luxuriant nature evokes the archetype of a paradisiacal landscape. This mode of seeing the continent's settings gradually became a formula that combined a precise depiction of elements taken from direct observation of nature, in a form that would be right to call "scientific", with a degree of inventiveness.

The multi-coloured tropical world copiously portrayed by Rugendas became a requisite and a standard for those artists who sought to satisfy the European taste for exotic spots and project onto those landscapes the very romantic yearning for a golden age. Moreover, the "feeling of truth", a type of accuracy in artworks that scientists, artists, and explorers so passionately enjoyed and pursued in America, seemed to have been better conjured up by colouring the surroundings (Donato Mello, 1973). As a result, one of the focal ways Europe approached tropical landscapes in the nineteenth century was by capturing



FIGURE 1. Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Paisaje en la selva virgen de Brasil con figuras (Brasilianischer Urwald)*, 1830, oil on canvas, 62,5 × 49,5 cm. Stiftung Preussische Schlosser und Garten, Berlin-Brandenburg. Artwork in the public domain; available from: Wikimedia https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johann_Moritz_Rugendas_-_Ärvore_gigantesca_na_selva_tropical_brasileira,_1830.jpg

its alluring colours, light, and shapes in a way that fired up fantasies and intellectual curiosity. Views of vast and endless jungles and the inexhaustible depiction of lavish nature reinforced such a scheme. Commentators who have documented this form of perceiving and conveying the tropics, such as Piere Gourou, Aimé Césaire, Denis Cosgrove, and David Arnold, have consistently used the same term: “Tropicality” (Gourou, 1953). This construct might be succinctly explained as the conceiving of tropical nature in “strikingly visual terms,” using Driver and de Lima Martins’ concise but clarifying definition (Driver and Martins, 2005, p. 5).

Eugène Delacroix’s *Fanatics of Tangier* (Fig. 2) reproduces, in turn, a series of widespread Oriental tropes. In nineteenth-century France, the Orient was a vast region covering the Near East and contiguous areas: northern Africa and western Asia, the Balkans and northern India (Shaw Cable, 2002). The scene displays an orgy of violence and energy customarily linked to non-European lands. This painting’s theme, made in 1838, is the an-

nual meeting of the Aissaouan brotherhood, a group of religious fanatics. The artist supposedly witnessed and sketched this event, endangering his own life while hiding on the roof of one of the houses featured in the painting (Delphi Classics, 2016, p. 113). Delacroix is more explicit about the scene in the brochure of the 1838 salon, the occasion in which this painting was exhibited: “their enthusiasm excited by prayers and wild cries, they enter into a veritable state of intoxication, and, spreading through the streets, perform a thousand contortions, and even dangerous acts.” Delacroix also confers on these people supernatural abilities, enigmatic rites and all sorts of customs quite out of the ordinary for the religious ceremonies in Europe of the time, such as walking on red coals, eating scorpions, licking “red-hot irons”, and walking on “sword blades” (Sharp, 2008, p. 22).

Based on these first images, we could uphold a priori that most of South America and the Orient’s imaginary were conceived of similarly, resulting in artworks imbued with the same *ethos* and almost identical themes. Such correlation lies in the conception of these two regions as outlandish zones which must be undergone in a romantic disposition of mind and represented accordingly, to such an extent that we could apply the definition of Orient by Edward Said verbatim to South America: “the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (Said, 1978, p. 1). If we had to point out a difference, nonetheless, that would be that since the nineteenth century, the construction of South America has been firmly and paradoxically anchored in “reality”. In other words, if European explorers have aestheticised the continent since its “discovery” in the fifteenth century, such aestheticisation has been offset latterly and empirically by its scientific survey, an issue in which Germans had a great deal of implication.

READY-MADE SETTINGS AND THE IMAGINATION

Another issue these two artists had to deal with was a certain preconception of the scenes they would witness. Rugendas was in many aspects overly attached to conventional descriptions that equated the tropics with the Garden of Eden. He acknowledged and truly felt the Brazilian tropical regions as “*paradiesisch*” (Rugendas, 1835, p. 22). Adhering to this impression, Rugendas painted and drew a paradise of flora and fauna, the assortment of which “lovers of nature, artists, and botanists” would equally admire and enjoy (Fig. 3) (Diener Ojeda, 1992, p. 15). Rugendas’ artworks are consistent with archetypal views and narratives of Brazil as the Garden of Eden. For centuries sailors and explorers had broadly disseminated this idea in Europe. Visions of Brazil as the Garden of Eden were usually exchangeable with other similar tropes such as Arcadia or Paradise. Even *El Dorado*, the mythological golden city located somewhere amidst Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and



FIGURE 2. Eugène Delacroix, *The Fanatics of Tangier*, 1837. Oil on canvas. Minneapolis Institute of Art. Artwork in the public domain; available from: MIA <https://collections.artsmia.org/art/1978/convulsionists-of-tangier-eugene-delacroix>



FIGURE 3. Johann Moritz Rugendas, Original title: *Forêt Vierge Près Manqueritipa*, 1835. Engraving from the album *Malerische Reise in Brasilien (Picturesque Travel Through Brazil)*, Plate 3, 1st Division. Artwork in the public domain; available from: Wikimedia https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Forêt_Vierge_Près_Manqueritipa.jpg

Brazil, could be linked to such visions.

Notwithstanding their different epistemic and etymological derivations, all these models allude to the same idealised Golden Age, a pre-industrial world yearned by the Romantics desperately. Romantics, in general, construed the Garden of Eden as space for returning to primitive pureness. Such a way to grasp South American nature replicates what Viorica Patea calls the “locus classicus” of the Garden: “the place where the nostalgic longings of lost innocence could be fulfilled again” (Patea, 2001, p. 29).

The main issue regarding such preconceptions was that pictures of the tropics and the Orient became a formula. Therefore, it was relatively frequent that some artists envisioned and formed images beforehand. Different accounts and stereotypes of his era influenced Delacroix significantly. Scholars have noticed in his texts allusions to “timelessness, cruelty, religious fanaticism, indolence, and the like, which characterise other accounts” (Delacroix, 2019, p. 3). Similarly, Delacroix’s words let us glimpse to what degree he had a clear idea of what he would see and what to look at in the Orient, especially regarding human physiognomies: “We assumed overall that we were going to see something similar to Turks. For an inhabitant of Paris, every follower of Mohammed is considered to be Turkish” (Delacroix, 2019, p. 34).

Delacroix’s letters written after trekking across Morocco are enlightening about the use of certain aesthetic concepts linked to landscapes out of Europe: “the picturesque here is in abundance. At every step one sees ready-made pictures, which would bring fame and fortune to twenty generations of painters” (Varisco, 2007, p. 172). The fact that Delacroix has used the expression “picturesque” to define the scenery exposed before his eyes, just like Rugendas also did in his *Voyage picturesque*, is in this respect revealing. In the nineteenth century, the picturesque situated the viewer outside the scene, “which must be viewed in the proper way from the proper point of view” (Townsend, 1997). This, in turn, according to D. Townsend, entailed a “detachment from ordinary”, which might lead to a “dehumanisation of art” (Townsend, 1997). In the same vein, several authors see in this kind of message the corroboration that, for the colonialist West vision, images from distant zones were, in some sense, ready to be projected (Driver and Martins, 2005, pp. 4-5). There is a patent degree of pragmatism in this, which resulted in artists taking advantage of “less developed” cultures. From this perspective, the systematic utilisation of concepts such as “paradisiacal” or “picturesque” to define non-European settings in the nineteenth century would have meant a sort of cultural arrogation to project a deeply rooted sense of cultural difference.

In practice, “picturesque,” “mysterious,” and “paradisiacal” are all expressions that frequently concealed the idea of the *Other*.¹¹ By way of illustration, the picturesque increasingly became a common descriptor of the “others” and not only a term employed to describe charming European sceneries. The concept appears alongside methodical explanations of nature, descriptions of landscape, people’s

physiognomic features (human types) and costumes.¹² Picturesque became synonymous with “exotic” when used in America or Africa. In effect, several European artists applied this term regularly to refer to a *picture* that included oddly clothed local characters carrying out some curious activity with an unfamiliar landscape in the background.

Driver and de Lima Martins consider this a crucial element to join Tropicality with Orientalism insofar as both aesthetics stress and legitimise substantial differences between Europe and the rest of the world. Such differences went to be powerfully defined in spatial terms (Driver and Martins, 2005, pp. 4-5). Following this argument, it matters little if the adjectives used to describe the Orient and the tropics had negative or positive undertones as they, as a rule of thumb, implicitly conveyed the binary and unsurmountable fissure between “them” and “us”. Thus, by projecting an idea of Paradise or the Garden of Eden onto Tropical America, for example, artists and explorers were establishing not only an impossible geographical distinction but also a cultural one. In the end, that was a very subtle form to set a demarcation between civilisation and savagery, between a high and an inferior evolution state. The tropics, in this matter, were unsurprisingly “made to bear a moral message that flattered Europe’s sense of superiority while denigrating its alien ‘other’” (Arnold, 2000). The point is that describing and depicting South America as an earthly paradise in the nineteenth century was not a naïve trend. On the contrary, “in an age obsessed with improvement and progress, with racial origins and competitive evolution, there were definite disadvantages to being the denizens of an earthly paradise” (Arnold, 2000).

Something similar happened with the images spawned in the Orient. Said’s argument to expound on Flaubert’s oriental perspective might also help us grasp Delacroix’s. Said explains that many of the French artists’ viewpoints were rooted in a search for a “visionary perspective.” This “imagination” of remote territories entailed pursuing “gorgeous colour, in contrast to the greyish tonality of the French provincial landscape. It meant exciting spectacle instead of humdrum routine, the perennially mysterious in place of the all too familiar” (Said, 2003, p. 185). The general suspicion is that when foreign settings did not meet artists’ expectations, artists drew on inventiveness, free reconstructions, and a forced over-enthusiasm to fulfil the hunger for the exotic. This is something that Delacroix recognises at some late point of his life when his Orientalism became less “realistic”: “I only began to make something passable, in [the images of] my trip to Africa, when I had forgotten enough small details to remember in my paintings only the striking, poetic aspects” (Delacroix, 1966). Likewise, that “Europe’s sense of superiority” noticed by David Arnolds in representations of the tropics also surfaces in Delacroix while visiting Africa. Several of his comments about the Africans’ insensitivity to art and beauty, a European cliché of sophistication and enlightenment, denote the tension between “civilised” and “uncivilised” humans. He commented casually to his friend Pierret how “Western money” could solve the problem of their reluctance to be portrayed: “Their prejudices

against the beautiful art of painting are very strong, but a few pieces of money here and there take care of their scruples” (Delacroix, 1966, p. 153).¹³ David O’Brien confirms this in the introduction of his thorough monograph on the French artist:

Delacroix profoundly admired the achievements of European civilisation: he saw himself as part of a long, grand tradition extending back to ancient Greece, and he was highly cognizant of the wealth and power that set Europe apart from the rest of the world in the nineteenth century (O’Brien, 2018, 5).

Delacroix’s links with the Orient and its people as a “project of the imagination, a fantasy space or screen onto which strong desires-erotic, sadistic or both-could be projected with impunity” started relatively early in his career (Nochlin, 1991, p. 59). The problem of the extent to which Delacroix invented his own version of the Orient is critical. This subject matter becomes even more fundamental when contrasted with Rugendas, who balanced a romanticised vision with a scientific understanding of the world in his artistic scrutiny of the American continent. Delacroix’s mental disposition towards the East was utterly different from Rugendas’. The search for artistic inspiration in the Orient did not demand Delacroix a cultural and elaborated understanding of the culture: “instead, it required a set of stable and potent orientalist signifiers, with which he could create his own meaning” (Jarmakani, 2008, p. 39).



FIGURE 4. Eugène Delacroix, *The Massacre at Chios*, 1824. Oil on canvas. Louvre, Paris. Artwork in the public domain; available from: Wikimedia https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eugène_Delacroix_-_Le_Massacre_de_Scio.jpg



FIGURE 5. Eugène Delacroix, *Death of Sardanapalus*, 1827. Oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris. Artwork in the public domain; available from: Wikimedia [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Death_of_Sardanapalus_\(La_Mort_de_Sardanapale\)__\(11606302215\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Death_of_Sardanapalus_(La_Mort_de_Sardanapale)__(11606302215).jpg)

Delacroix became an Orientalist painter much before travelling to Orient. The backdrops and many of the figures he chose for two of his Orientalist masterpieces—produced before going to Africa and Spain, must be emphasised—that is: *The Massacre at Chios* (1824) (Fig. 4) and *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827) (Fig. 5) were pure inventions seasoned with the new flavour of Orient. In several works made in the 1820s, including hundreds of sketches, Delacroix inspired and directly copied attires and garnishes put on mannequins that a friend of his, the sculptor, traveller and dandy M. Auguste, brought to Delacroix's studio from his explorations across oriental countries.¹⁴ To render his “most radical work,” *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827), Delacroix got inspired by Lord Byron's play *Sardanapalus* (1821), a narration about the final days of the last king of Assyria (Delphi Classics, 2016, p. 76). Gerald Needham corroborates that many of the best Orientalist French painters never went to the Middle East or, like Delacroix, stayed only for a brief period nurturing their Orientalism from props and souvenirs (Needham, 1982). In an entry in Delacroix's diary, we read: “I bought some engravings for 5 francs in the rue de Saint-Peres: Oriental costumes and barbaric instruments” (Delacroix, 1951, p. 36). Additionally, Michele Hannoosh goes as far as to affirm that “the most orientalist” Delacroix, in the standard meaning of the term, was that of before journeying to the Maghreb (Delacroix, 2019, p. 4). This is admitting that Orientalism, to a great length, depended on imagination.



FIGURE 6. Eugène Delacroix, *Studies of a seated Arab*, 1832. Black, red and white chalk, brush and red-brown wash on paper. The British Museum. Available from (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/235573001>

In contrast, Rugendas became a Tropicalist painter while in the tropical zones and primarily because of being there. He never executed tropical themes before travelling to America. Moreover, most of his paintings are a truthful representation of what he was witnessing, including landscape, nature and people. Regarding truthfulness, it has been asserted that many of Delacroix's portrayals of the Orient could hardly be regarded as ethnographic because of the lack of it (Fig. 6) (Nochlin, 1991, p. 59). Rugendas' work, instead, does possess this quality inasmuch that Tomas Lago contends that the German artist was what we would denominate nowadays as an “ethnology illustrator” (Fig. 7) (Lago, 1960, p. 17).



FIGURE 7. Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Black woman, seller*, 1822-1825. Pencil and ink on paper. Private collection. Published in Diener, Pablo, and Maria de Fátima G. Costa. *Rugendas e o Brasil*. [2a ed.]. Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2012, n.p.

A critical aspect that distinguishes then Delacroix from Rugendas, or to put it in another way, Tropicality from Orientalism, is that for Rugendas, travelling was imperative and a determining factor for the surfacing of the tropical aesthetic. Simply put, there cannot be Tropicality without visiting the tropics, but there can be Orientalism without ever stepping on Orient soil. The “feeling of truth” so crucial for Germans was chiefly attainable through accounts, notes and illustrations made *in situ*. In many ways, for Rugendas making art in Brazil was an act of empirical observation, equivalent to scientific activity, while for Delacroix, the Orient meant utopia, a place to fulfil a large set of all kinds of fantasies.

Although a significant portion of Rugendas' oeuvre in South America could be considered within the phenomenon of Tropicality, there is one painting in particular where it surfaces in a much more compelling way. Rugendas painted *La siesta (The Nap)* (Fig. 8) in 1850, after returning to Europe and meeting Delacroix. The tableau features a group of women having some leisure time after lunch. Two mestiza nursemaids look after a baby on the left while three ladies from Latin America's high society deal with the extreme heat and drift into a light doze on



FIGURE 8. Johann Moritz Rugendas, *La siesta (The Nap)*, 1850. Oil on canvas. Published in Diener, Pablo, and Maria de Fátima G. Costa. *Rugendas e o Brasil*. [2a ed.]. Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2012, n.p.

their hammocks and chairs. In the background, viewers can appreciate the corner of a building that recalls a classical structure. The fountain, the columns, and the arches,

although too high, resemble typical colonial houses, with large semi-open corridors that blur the limit between interior and exterior.

Nevertheless, what is striking in this painting is nature. Abundant tropical foliage and animals frame the ethereal and sensual scene becoming protagonists. In this painting, Rugendas unusually takes some liberties. Since he was not travelling through America at the moment of making it, he likely felt freed from the pressure of achieving scientific exactitude. Hence, even though he depicted the animals correctly in morphological terms, the parrot, the lamas, and the monkey are all native species that do not coexist together in South America. The lamas inhabit the high Andean altiplano, whereas the parrot and the monkey are tropical species. The dog is a domestic creature, so its presence is circumstantial. By the same token, the plants and trees Rugendas painted could work separately as illustrations for botany books. However, the ensemble is illusory since the maguey cactus that we can see surrounded by tropical ferns and palms in the lower right corner grows in Mexico's arid regions and not in the tropics.

La siesta comes to substantiate two points. Firstly, this painting shows to what degree Tropicality and the terri-



FIGURE 9. Eugène Delacroix, *Les Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement (The Women of Algiers)* Oil study on canvas. Louvre Museum. Artwork in the public domain; available from: Wikimedia https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Delacroix_Frauen_von_Alger.jpg

torial presence were physically fastened. So robust was this connection that some commentators have noticed that once Rugendas returned to Europe, he reverted to a “more classical mode of painting.”¹⁵ In effect, and paradoxically, *La siesta* is Rugendas’ most Orientalist painting, for he used the imagination to form a synthesis. He even managed a method similar to that employed by Delacroix in his 1834’ *Women of Algiers (Femmes d’Alger)* (Fig. 9), another of his most famed Oriental paintings. Unlike Rugendas’ method, Delacroix’s involved to work up in the atelier watercolours and sketches fashioned while journeying in conjunction with his memories to transform “an initial impression into a genuine expression of the ‘personal ideal’” (Prettejohn, 2005, p. 87). Such a method implies a different approach based on a dependency on Europe as a critical location for the art practice. In this fashion, if *La siesta* looks more fanciful in comparison with the rest of Rugendas’ works, it is because he rendered it by using the hundreds of sketches and memories he gathered in over eighteen years of journeying through America and not on the spot.

The second point refers to *La siesta*’s most dominant element, nature. Through this painting, we realise that no matter how accurate or fictional Rugendas was, the tropics will continue to be seen as a wonderland where the human presence and nature coexist in a subtle tightness. Likewise, if admittedly, this painting represents Rugendas’ “personal ideal” of South American nature, such a model was rooted in an everlasting conception of these natural settings as a kingdom loaded with Biblical nuances. Thereby, the whole scene seems to be subtly alluding to a nativity. Indeed, the group of three mestizo women close to the naked white baby brings to mind the three wise men, while the exotic fauna presented as barnyard animals give the painting the effect of a tropical manger.

SEXUALISED BODIES AND SAVAGE ENERGY

A closer look at two of Rugendas and Delacroix’s central themes, viz., erotised bodies and a sort of violent energy flowing all over denoted by wild animals and scenes of remarkable fierceness, reveals even more similarities between Orientalism and Tropicality. However contentious it might seem, an acute differentiation between European and non-European human physiognomies, as well as a sexual subtext combined with a high degree of brutality customarily attributed to the *Others*’ bodies in nineteenth-century Europe, defined several of their images and intentions.

The central subject of Delacroix’s *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* (Fig 9) is the sensual mystery and innate alleged eroticism that flowed through the bodies of oriental females. This “Eastern still life,” as Simon Lee calls it, made in 1834, shows a group of concubines in a harem sensually enjoying a hookah, a utensil used to smoke hashish and opium (Lee, 2015, p. 180). Its sexual overtones divided viewers and critics’ opinions. The first time the painting was exhibited at the 1834 Salon received high commends, but it also disconcerted some viewers

who disapproved of its suggestiveness (Delphi Classics, 2016, p. 236).

Oriental women’s bodies were a forbidden treasure for westerners. While in Algiers, however, Delacroix managed to access a house to witness the legendary spectacle of a harem for the first time. Delacroix defied the strict Islamic conventions which ban the use of naturalistic images. Besides aniconism, the artist had to deal with the fact that women wore veils, making his task even more difficult. Delacroix could make it through a former Christian converted to Islam, who allowed him entry into his harem. So, unlike many other artists whose oriental bodies were “pure invention,” Delacroix did sketch this scene from life (Delphi Classics, 2016, p. 143). In this painting, a group of women enveloped in a shadowy atmosphere is dressed in their most delicate garments and wear luxury jewellery. After entering the concubines’ residence, Delacroix reacted euphorically, calling them “beautiful human gazelles,” as Mornay narrates (Lee, 2015, p. 176). Delacroix was electrified by a world that seemed like a “tale out of the *Thousand and One Nights*” (Delacroix, 2019, p. 25).

The harem is an iconic theme in the argument of the projections of western anxieties on distant cultures. The western picturing of multiple wives and uninterrupted sexual activity tabooed by Christianity became a topic of intense fascination in the nineteenth century. Even Rugendas’ *La siesta* evokes such fixation. Both are, in effect, trancelike scenes infused with an exotic sensualism in timeless settings. Delacroix overtly avowed that the harem was stunning “like Homer’s time” just before commencing to sketch the scene (Lee, 2015, p. 176). Rugendas, on the other hand, suggested such a feeling by including a structure in the background, which slightly recalls mythological times. In Delacroix’s painting, the women’s semi-opened eyes and bodies in repose subtly hint at a state of sexual lethargy. Similarly, in Rugendas’ tableau, no display of flesh is necessary to convey the erotic dynamism everlastingly attached to the tropics. The representation of dozing figures fanning their bodies impregnated by the suffocating heat is enough to kindle the western imagination of disposed and consenting women.

The wearing of veils in the Orient was central to Orientalism and its conception of femininity, and of course, it fascinated Delacroix significantly. The French artist attached mysterious and erotic meanings to this accessory:

This use of the veil throughout the Orient, if you set aside the slightly grotesque shape that it confers on women, does not fail to have something very enticing about it. You are free to consider them all beautiful under those wrappings, and when you see them pass near you, armed, as their only attraction, with that dark, expressive glance that heaven gave to nearly all those creatures, you experience something of the tantalising curiosity that you feel at a masked ball (Delacroix, 2019, p. 54).

Rugendas also alludes to “the forbidden” of Oriental feminine bodies by depicting veiled women in Peru (Fig. 10). This painting shows a group of women leaving the

church after the service in Lima while a clergyman and a gentleman, both dominated by curiosity and desire, throw harassing gazes at them. The veil, a symbol of exoticised womanhood, suggested virginity and possession. Much like in the Orient, where veiled women “continue to operate as the visual vocabulary through which collective anxieties about new forms of power and progress manifest” (Jarmakani, 2008, p. 139), in South America, this practice was related to the restricted morality of European Catholicism imposed by the use of force over peoples’ behaviour during colonial times.



FIGURE 10. Johann Moritz Rugendas, *The ‘Tapadas’ Exiting the Church*, 1843. Oil on canvas, Renato Mazzoni, Paris. Published in Diener, Pablo, and Maria de Fátima G. Costa. *Rugendas e o Brasil*. [2a ed.]. Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2012, n.p.

Behind these paintings rests a sophisticated set of colonialist biases regarding tropical and oriental women. Passive ladies posing for an intruder artist, who comes to dominate the scene to offer the enlightened viewer a peek inside the enigmatic *Others’* sexuality, became a demonstration of western eye-centred dominance. Such authority was powerfully bonded to actual territorial colonialist projects in the nineteenth century. In point of fact, France conquered Algeria in 1830. Much of Delacroix’s interest in travelling to that region did not come from a spontaneous artistic drive alone; rather, it was motivated by an invite to join a diplomatic mission extended by Mornay (Delphi Classics, 2016, p. 154). Even though it did not formally invade South America, Germany had a

considerable colonialist presence on the continent. In the nineteenth century, German settlements were founded in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, all nations across which Rugendas travelled.

According to Susanne Zantop, there is a firm connection between colonialism and sexual fantasies. Following this argument, we could interpret Rugendas and Delacroix’s erotic drives as the cultural reflection of the symbolic and actual European authority and control over these regions. Accordingly, not only the Orient was seen as a realm of “hidden treasures” but tropical South America too, for both were territories “hampered by unsurmountable physical difficulties—the stifling climate, the diseases, the poverty of the land, the ferocity with which its inhabitants defended their lives and habitats against foreign predators” (Zantop, 1997, pp. 10–11). The correlation between physical dominion and sexualisation becomes unmistakable when observing that Rugendas even eroticised Brazilian black slavery (Fig. 11). This, in turn, had to do with a bizarre topographical symbolism of America, in a way that for nineteenth-century explorers, “the north upper parts of the continental body” represented “head and chest,” that is, “intellect and feelings,” whereas the south embodied the sexual lower parts (Zantop, 1997, p. 10).

However, it was not only the tendency to sexualise and exoticise women that united Tropicality and Orientalism. More correlations between these two outlooks can be drawn, for example, through other of Rugendas and Delacroix’s most recognizable painterly themes, viz., scenes of physical violence. Scholars agree in placing this matter within the multiple variations of sexual fantasies in the context of nineteenth-century European expansionism. If one puts Delacroix’s *Arabian Fantasy* (1833) (Fig. 12) next to Rugendas’ *El Malon* or *The Kidnapping* (1834) (Fig. 13), it becomes immediately apparent that both paintings have more than one element in common, apart from being two superb illustrations of Oriental and South American subjects.

By looking at these two paintings, the viewer can effectively figure out Tropicality and Orientalism’s prevailing impulses. Sensual semi-naked bodies, contorted silhouettes, horses and the sharp contrast between white and dark skins were features of the Orientalist painting that resounded in Rugendas intensely (Peltre and Dectet, 1998). If Delacroix and dozens of French and British painters brought into the visual expression of Orientalism “sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, intense energy” (Said, 2003, p. 118), the same did Rugendas with Tropicality, one could argue. Taken as a whole, the ferocious Indians stalking European explorers in the middle of the jungle became the tropical version of assassins and nomad tribes of the desert.

Kidnapping scenes meant a distinctive variation of the harem sexual fantasies so profusely portrayed by Orientalist artists. Rugendas’ *Kidnapping* shows the abduction of a white woman, Trinidad Salcedo, by a group of indigenous males. The theme of kidnappings, which might be regarded as a geographical adaptation of the classic abduction of the Sabine women, obsessed Rugendas for a



FIGURE 11. Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Studies of slaves*, 1823. Pencil on paper. Published in Diener, Pablo, and Maria de Fátima G. Costa. *Rugendas e o Brasil*. [2a ed.]. Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2012, n.p.



FIGURE 12. Eugène Delacroix, *Arabian fantasy (Jumping riders)*, 1833. Oil on canvas. Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main. Artwork in the public domain; available from <https://sammlung.staedelmuseum.de/en/work/fantasia-arabe>



FIGURE 13. Johann Moritz Rugendas, *El malon (The kidnapping)*, 1834. Oil on canvas. Private collection, Santiago de Chile. Artwork in the public domain; available from: Wikimedia https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mauricio_rugendas_-_el_malon.jpg

long time, even after his definitive return to Europe. This theme reinforces Zantop's contention of the "colonial fantasies of sexual bliss", which is firmly connected with the coloniser's "obsession with conquest and appropriation in cross-cultural, cross-racial romances" (Zantop, 1997, p. 3). Nevertheless, such fantasy is revealed in an inverse direction to the Oriental harem, in which a single man takes ownership of various women. In Rugendas' kidnappings, various indigenous men possess a single lady. The white, educated, and sophisticated European woman becomes the object of desire for the savage and sexually indomitable Indians. In the three known versions of Rugendas' captures, he lively conveyed the agitation of the clash, the exoticism of this indigenous group, and the commotion that capturing beautiful European-descendent women caused (Fig. 14).

Visceral movements, agitation, and vivid colours channel the allegedly violent human energy of the Orient and the tropics. This preconception imbues the work of Delacroix and Rugendas to a great extent. More explicitly than Rugendas, Delacroix admits in his *Memories of a Visit to Morocco* that: "At that time, a journey to Morocco could seem as strange as one to a land of cannibals. All sorts

of ridiculous or lugubrious occurrences became so many omens that would have given the ancients pause. On the way, we encountered only dead or dying people, broken mirrors, etc." (Delacroix, 2019, p. 26). Considering this, it is not rare that both painters thought of specific themes, such as hunt scenes, as an effective way to explore the enigmatic union between the dwellers of those lands with the sublime wilderness of nature. From a broader perspective, hunt scenes like those produced by Rugendas and Delacroix (Figs. 15, 16, 17) served the purpose of outlining the thin boundary between "primitive" and "civilised." Nature in the nineteenth century, according to Paul Smethurst, "acquired symbolic weight in the politics of trade and empire, where it reinforced racial, ethnic, gender and sexual prejudices" (Smethurst, 2013, p. 3). In this way, Africa and America mainly were presented to the European spectators as territories of survival and savageness.

Brazil, the country Rugendas first visited, was the land of yellow fever, malaria, crocodiles, jaguars, and the Amazonia's poisonous serpents. His paintings convey much of the action of the jungle through defined strokes and vibrant colours. When he returned to Paris, he introduced himself as a survivor (Lago, 1960, pp. 12-13). Delacroix,



FIGURE 14. Johann Moritz Rugendas, *El malon (The Kidnapping)*, 1845. Oil on canvas. Private collection, Santiago de Chile. Published in Diener, Pablo, and Maria de Fátima G. Costa. *Rugendas e o Brasil*. [2a ed.]. Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2012, n.p.



FIGURE 15. Eugène Delacroix, *Tiger Hunt*, 1854. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay. Artwork in the public domain; available from: Wikimedia https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b5/Eugène_Delacroix_-_Tiger_Hunt_-_WGA6231.jpg



FIGURE 16. Eugène Delacroix, *Lion Hunt*, 1861. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay. Artwork in the public domain; available from: Wikimedia https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8d/Delacroix_lion_hunt_1855.JPG



FIGURE 17. Johann Moritz Rugendas, Original title: *Chasse au Tigre*. Title Translation: *Chasing a Tiger*, 1835. Engraving from the book *Voyage pittoresque dans le Brésil* (Pitoyesque Travel Through Brazil) Plate 3, 3rd Division. Artwork in the public domain; available from: Wikimedia https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chasse_au_Tigre.jpg

instead, felt attracted by the ferocity of wild animals. Fighting horses, lions and tigers are recurrent motifs in his catalogue of works. A case in point is his *Lion Hunt*, a painting inspired by Rubens, an artist whom Delacroix respected deeply. Revealingly, he painted this canvas thirty years after his sojourn to Africa and Spain and drew the lion at the Jardin des Plants in Paris, and yet Delacroix chose an Oriental setting to place the action (Delphi Classics, 2016, p. 305). In this way, these paintings continued reinforcing associations of the Arab and tropical worlds with risky and nonsensical practices.

The question of the extent to which images of wild beasts and clashes are representatives of the historical European construction of the Orient and the tropics is quite germane. David Arnold underscores that Europe's engagement with the tropics has uninterruptedly based on duality, resulting in the tropics being portrayed "as much pestilential as paradisiacal." Consequently, the association of the tropics with images of "primitiveness, violence and destruction," including "the speed and fatality of tropical diseases, the destructiveness of tropical storms, the ferocity of tigers and other carnivorous beasts prowling in malarious jungles," has been continuous (Arnold, 2000). Similar assumptions were made about the Oriental world in the nineteenth century. Edward Said brings out Chateaubriand's opinion as an axiomatic example of how Europe judged the Orient. In his view, the Orient was a realm where its people had "fallen again into a savage state" (Said, 2003, pp. 171-172). The conviction that these two territories were feeble canvases awaiting Western restorative endeavours pervades, in one way or another, many of Rugendas and Delacroix's artworks of Oriental and Tropical themes and ultimately turned into the main message that Europe received about these remote regions of the world.

CONCLUSION

Delacroix and Rugendas were Romantic artists who transmitted a series of cultural preconceptions and personal interpretations of the Orient and Tropical America through their artworks. Tropicality and Orientalism were not only aesthetic trends but also multi-layered models of thinking and construing the *Otherness*. Despite the compelling connections between these two conceptions, little has been said about how arts were useful media to communicate a set of assumptions, prejudices, and colonialist perspectives of those territories that in the nineteenth century were under European influence and territorial control.

From a strictly thematic perspective, Gerald Needham, commenting on the 1982 exhibition *Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting 1800-1880*, which included artworks by Delacroix, asserts that French Orientalism encompassed themes as diverse as "recreations of ancient Egyptian life, Biblical history from both Old and New Testaments, modern Islam, the desert, the bazaars, genre scenes, pure fantasy, and much else" (Needham, 1982). Such a seemingly aleatory mixing of themes representing the East certainly has a parallel in Rugendas' South American paintings. In a straightforward exercise,

one could use the same characterisation of Orientalism to present the topics that Tropicality dealt with: "recreations of tribal pre-Columbian life, representations of Paradise with Biblical undertones, pantheism, the Amazon and Andes, the pampas, the South American city markets, explorers' tales, genre scenes, and much else."

Several elements were synchronous and comparable in the artworks that Delacroix and Rugendas produced during and after their journeys. In particular, the influence of tales and narrations was fundamental for casting a preconception of America and Africa in their minds. Byron, Scott, and Humboldt, as well as archetypal images of paradisiacal nature taken up from voyagers' tales, plus the idea of an enveloping sexual atmosphere of the Orient drawn from the *Thousand and One Nights* served as their primary sources of inspiration. As a result, we find almost identical themes and *ethos* in many of their oeuvres executed before, during or after their journeys. Scenes of violence and bizarre customs, suggestive portraits of women, hunt scenes, and the like became leitmotifs in both artists.

Beyond the noticeable formal and subject matter resemblances between Rugendas and Delacroix, their paintings, drawings, and texts provide clear insights into the imagination and the rational scrutiny of America and the Orient. One of the main problems that such depictions introduce is the weight of the imagination over truthfulness. In other words, as Edward Said claims, the Orient—and here we could include South America—was, for its most part, a European invention. Such a contention finds solid ground in the visual. A range of the images rendered by Delacroix and Rugendas of Oriental and Tropical subjects might be regarded as ready-made pictures or as illustrations partially executed to satisfy the European taste for exotic spots, eroticism, and barbarity. This becomes more apparent in Delacroix, who started experimenting with tropical backdrops, souvenirs, travel prints, and props much before making his Oriental tour.

The experience of travelling was a point that made a crucial difference between Delacroix and Rugendas. Rugendas, in effect, did not engage with the tropics, at least thematically in his paintings, until he arrived in Brazil and travelled across the tropical regions. Moreover, he did not consider only depicting nature, landscapes, customs and people but scrutinising the entire region underpinned by a scientific gaze inherited from Alexander von Humboldt, his mentor. In this sense, French artists only showed an "instrumental interest" in the Middle East, "solely as subject matter" (Needham, 1982). In other words, there cannot exist Tropicality without experiencing the tropics, but there can be Orientalism without ever visiting the East.

Verisimilitude, on the other hand, was never a mandatory requisite for making art in the nineteenth century and even less for Romantic artists who had the imagination in the highest regard. Moreover, following the model of cultural critique centred on the idea of projection, "Europeans often saw what they wanted to see" when they travelled to remote lands such as South America or the Orient (Driver and Martins, 2005, p. 8). Nevertheless, it is the aftermaths of such fantasies that matters. Behind their Ro-

mantic vision rested the thinking of the era of explorations and colonialism, the unavoidable barrier between “them” and “us” erected throughout time, and the projection of imaginary geographies and bodies. In this regard, both artists replicated and then helped propagate archetypical discourses on landscapes, people, sex, race, diseases, and climates, which until today are commonly associated with the Orient and the tropics. The tendency to combine the entire Near East “as an undifferentiated ‘Orient’ and projecting fantasies of eroticism and violence on this Oriental ‘other’” (Rosenthal, 1982, p. 9) is a clear outcome that might be readily likened to how America (the continent) has been narrated as if it were a uniform territorial unit loaded of the same biases. Such stories have moulded the whole of South America as a tropical realm where Indians live in covenant with God and nature, stuck in an alleged state of savagery that awakened the same attraction for sensualism and brutality as the exotic Orient.

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NOTES

- 1 This concept encompasses the whole range of tropical countries ranging from the Caribbean Islands to parts of India, Congo, Uganda, and Vietnam. South American countries such as Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Brazil are also included in the tropical nations.
- 2 Andalucía in southern Spain was considered “near Orient” owing to the immense heritage of Al-Andalus. McSweeney and Hopkins, 2017.
- 3 Delacroix rendered two versions of this painting. The first version was painted in Paris in 1834 and is currently at the Louvre. The second work painted fifteen years later between 1847 and 1849, is located at the Musée Fabre, Montpellier, France. This paper considers the first version, which is also the most famed one.
- 4 A comprehensive study of Delacroix’s paintings can be found in Johnson, 1963; 1981; Noon and Riopelle, 2015; O’Brien, 2018; to cite a few. Some of the most relevant investigations on Rugendas are Richert, 1942; Lago, 1960; Bindis, 1989; Diener Ojeda, 1992; Diener, 2007a; 2007b; Diener and Costa, 2012.
- 5 Apart from his travelogue, Delacroix wrote two articles *A Jewish Wedding in Morocco*, published in 1842, and *Memories of a Visit to Morocco* rediscovered in 1996. Both were written after his trip. It is known he had seven notebooks and albums of drawings, of which six have been recovered. For a thorough account of Delacroix’s writing and albums see Delacroix, 2019.
- 6 Regarding the notes of his trip across Brazil, the Russian historian Boris Komissarov suggests that Rugendas diary was not written by him but by Victor-Aimé Huber (Komissarov, 1988). Victor-Aimé Huber, based on Rugendas’ account, wrote the text that goes with Rugendas’ monumental illustrated album *Voyage pittoresque dans le Brésil*, which was published in periodical instalments between 1827 and 1835.
- 7 The word America in this article refers to the whole continent, and not to the United States of America.

- 8 On tropicality and Orientalism see Driver and Martins, 2005, p. 4. About Rugendas, Brazil and the tropics see Diener and Costa, 2012 and Siqueira, 2015.
- 9 They met for the first time in Paris in 1825, and seemingly they had successive encounters in the subsequent years, although there is no record of most of them. The last reunion seems to have been particularly relevant. It befell on 11 May 1847 after agreeing on an interview to exchange ideas on their works and journeys. At that time, Rugendas had just returned to Europe definitively, after spending over eighteen years wandering through America. On the other hand, fifteen years had passed since Delacroix journeyed through Spain and Africa. The details of such a meeting appear in an entry in Delacroix’s diary. Despite being rather succinct, the entry supplies fascinating minutiae. That morning Delacroix had visited Frédéric Chopin in the company of Charles Edgar, count of Mornay and the first French ambassador to Morocco. Rugendas had to wait for a couple of hours before meeting him. Once they gathered, Rugendas excitedly showed Delacroix his portfolio made up of thousands of paintings, drawings and sketches completed in America. However, Delacroix’s reaction was dispassionate and cold, as seen in this excerpt from his diary: “retrouve chez moi Rugendas avec ses portefeuilles que j’ai vus avec plaisir, mais avec encore plus de fatigue.” (Delacroix, 1893, p. 311).
- 10 The fascination with non-western cultures goes as far back as the seventeenth century. By that time, Orientalism had attracted scholarly attention in France and England (Facos, 2011, p. 154).
- 11 The use of the word *Other* in this article has the same meaning that Henry Gates gives it in literature, that is “the odd metaphorical negation of the European defined as African, Arabic, Chinese, Latin American, Yiddish, or female authors” (Gates, 1985).
- 12 The fact that Rugendas’ album has been titled *Malerische Reise in Brasilien (Picturesque Voyage through Brazil)*, Paris, 1827-1835) is a first indication of the relevance of this aesthetic category. Rugendas’ biographers very often use the picturesque to describe the whole of the drawings and paintings he produced in America. Gertrud Richert, for example, stresses the *malerischen Zeichnungen* (picturesque drawings) Rugendas made in Peru very much (Richert, 1942, p. 89). Others, instead, averred that the picturesque was one of the aesthetic currents that most influenced his art production (Cid and Vergara, 2011). His *Album of Chilean Attires* might also be taken as an example of how the picturesque pervaded some descriptions of a manifest anthropological tone (Rugendas, 1838). For a thorough account of Rugendas and the picturesque see Diener, 2007a. Delacroix also employed the term with profusion in his diaries and travelogues. For a comprehensive analysis of Delacroix and the picturesque see O’Brien, 1998, Chapter IV ‘Theories of the Picturesque and Expression’ and O’Brien, 2018.
- 13 Letter dated Tangier, 8 February [1832], in *Correspondance generale*.
- 14 For a complete analysis of these artworks see Bernard, 1971.
- 15 “Rugendas, Johann Moritz, Latin American Art” Sotheby, September 4, 2020. <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/latin-american-art-n08451/lot.64.html>.

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