

**Zeitschrift:** Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte =  
Revue suisse d'art et d'archéologie = Rivista svizzera d'arte e  
d'archeologia = Journal of Swiss archeology and art history

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum

**Band:** 43 (1986)

**Heft:** 2

**Artikel:** Charles Gleyre's Penthée and the creative imagination

**Autor:** Hauptman, William

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-168781>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 16.04.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

# Charles Gleyre's Penthée and the Creative Imagination

by WILLIAM HAUPTMAN



Fig. 1 Charles Gleyre, *Penthée poursuivie par les Ménades*, 1864–5. 121×200,7 cm, oil on canvas. Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel (Inv. 249).

It has become one of the chief tasks of the historian of nineteenth century art to reassess schools of art and individual artists who have heretofore been neglected or haphazardly relegated to the second rank. The goal of this revisionist history, already begun in the 1970's in regard to the nature of academic and "official" art<sup>1</sup>, is to see in a new perspective the fertile development of nineteenth century art without the prejudicial view that academic art need necessarily be linked to bad taste or entirely removed from avant-garde trends. Thus, new studies have come forth recently of not only forgotten painters and sculptors, but also of such unpreviously studied areas as the art of Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Italy, and Switzerland, to name but a few examples.<sup>2</sup> The results of these investigations indicate that the previous ideas held by historians in regard to the values and dimensions of these artists and schools had been

generally incorrect or in some cases never fully comprehended.

An important example of this unnecessary neglect is the career of Marc-Charles-Gabriel Gleyre. Since the large centenary exhibition of 1974 in Europe and the first American showing of his works in 1980<sup>3</sup>, it has become clear that Gleyre's painting was much richer in style, content, and imagination than generally accorded. Indeed, Théophile Gautier's characterization of Gleyre in 1845 as a *peintre-philosophe*<sup>4</sup> describes more aptly the nature of his mature works; for a detailed examination of his paintings reveals an exploration of subject and theme that is too often hidden beneath the polished surface of a seemingly simple iconographic structure. This effort on the part of Gleyre to develop an uncommon iconographic and philosophic element in his *œuvre* stems already from his first success in the Paris salon

in 1843 in the curious imagery of *Le Soir*, more commonly known as *Les Illusions perdues*. The seemingly facile image of regret and loss portrayed through the old bard and the receding boat veils a deeper meaning aligned not only to autobiographical circumstances, but also to the literary and philosophic trends of the period.<sup>5</sup>

It is difficult to easily classify the artistic flow of Gleyre's art because of the painter's own fluctuating ideals and his constant search for new expressive forms. He was content neither as a Classicist nor as a Romantic and may be said to have attempted to find a mediating path between the two extremes, a *juste-milieu* of which his *Soir*, with its academic technique but romantic sentiment, is but an early example. As HIPPOLYTE TAINE noted, Gleyre was an extremely private man who rarely verbalized his artistic philosophy even to his closest friends.<sup>6</sup> There are, in fact, large contradictions in his paintings and artistic credo that often seem to defy traditional artistic rubrics: while he often relied upon classical or religious motifs, he also sought out new dimensions in nationalistic historical works<sup>7</sup>, produced dozens of sketches and esquisses for works that have yet to be identified because of their obscure subjects, and even developed projects on grandiose Saint-Simonian themes replete with new political emblems.<sup>8</sup> It is perhaps typical of Gleyre's changing values that while he spent more time in the Near East than most of his contemporaries, he never fully applied the imagery of the Orient in his work despite his own large corpus of pictorial souvenirs which he guarded jealously in his atelier until his death in 1874.<sup>9</sup> Yet, a constant strain in Gleyre's paintings, whether drawn from classical, religious, historical, or even invented iconography, is the desire to utilize elements and themes which were not current at the time-in effect, to develop a pictorial imagery from nontraditional sources in the effort to enrich the subsurface content of his pictures. In this light, a study of his painting *Penthée poursuivie par les Ménades* (fig. 1), painted in 1864-65, provides an essential base for further comprehending the originality that marks Gleyre's later works. An examination of the painting also underscores certain aspects of Swiss artistic politics in its commission by the Basel art establishment and the problems surrounding its loan for an exhibition of Gleyre's works later.

It should be stated at the outset that the iconography of Pentheus is in itself very rare in the pictorial arts. Most of the examples found are from antique vases and coins, or in fresco decorations, the most well-known being in the House of the Vetii in Pompeii.<sup>10</sup> For later art, not one example has been located before Gleyre's choice of the subject, despite the fact that the theme had appeared in nineteenth century French literature.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Gleyre's use of the story as the subject of a major painting emphasizes clearly the artist's desire for innovative practice and freshness in regard to thematic selection.

The literary sources for the story of Pentheus derive principally from Euripides and Ovid, both of which were available to Gleyre in translation, the former in a new edition of 1842.<sup>12</sup> Few stories from classical mythology

contain the terrifying and gruesome events surrounding Pentheus' actions and subsequent fate. The central element in the myth is the power of the Dionysiac cult which included in its rites such practices as the tearing apart of animals and the devouring of their flesh raw. Pentheus was the son of Agaue and Echion and consequently the inheritor of the throne of Thebes. When Dionysius returned to Thebes to establish his cult, Pentheus, in an act of supreme mortal arrogance, refused to allow his worship, thus also denying the god's own divinity. Although Pentheus was repeatedly warned against his attitude towards the gods by the blind soothsayer Tiresias – in Ovid, Pentheus is described as “unus contemptor superum,” one who despises the gods –, he nevertheless accepted the challenge of his royal right against the divine rights of the gods. Yet, despite the ban on the Dionysiac worship, the power of the cult was so great that it was secretly practiced by the Theban women, including Pentheus' own mother Agaue. Pentheus permitted himself to be tempted into seeing the actual rites performed, but in hiding and disguised as a woman.<sup>13</sup> He was later discovered by his mother who in her frenzied state mistook him for a wild boar, captured and dismembered him, and brought her son's head back to the palace in triumph. The moral of the story is that the disobedience of the gods is followed by swift punishment.

#### *The history of the painting*

The precise development of Gleyre's painting has never been completely elucidated. The painter's friend and biographer, the critic CHARLES CLÉMENT, provides the basic information on the origin of the work<sup>14</sup>, but from the perspective of his own memories and without thorough documentation. Clément noted that Gleyre begun work on the subject, in the form of two sketches which would later furnish the painter with the essential elements of the iconography, during the first years of their association – that is to say, in the late 1840's.<sup>15</sup> At this time, Gleyre was well on the way to critical and popular success. After the triumphant showing of *Le Soir* in 1843, he followed with his *Séparation des Apôtres*, now in Montargis, in the salon of 1845 where the painter was awarded a coveted first-class medal: most critics hailed the work as a masterpiece of religious genre and praised particularly the originality of the subject.<sup>16</sup> Gleyre's own interest in classical subject matter was heightened in late 1845 with a trip to Northern Italy where he studied the works of the Renaissance and Baroque masters. This provided Gleyre with a renewed impetus for mythological subjects, producing shortly afterwards such works as his *Cléonis et Cydippe*, the iconography of which seems to have been invented<sup>17</sup>, the *Nymphe Echo*, which reveals the influence of Venetian art<sup>18</sup>, and the gigantic *Danse des Bacchantes*, finished only in 1849 and seen briefly in the salon of that year – the last work Gleyre would show in the Paris exhibitions – before it was installed in the Spanish royal collection.<sup>19</sup>



Fig. 2 Charles Gleyre, *Penthée caché*, 1840's (?). 27×45,7 cm, pencil on paper. Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (D. 1055).

It is not known for certain what drew Gleyre to the Penthée story, nor is it known why the two studies Clément mentioned – about which more will be said below – were never brought to completion during this period of intense work. To be sure, other tasks intervened, including the commission for *Le Major Davel*, completed for the newly established Musée Arlaud in Lausanne in 1850, as well as its pendant *Les Romains passant sous le joug*, likewise commissioned for the museum, but not completed until 1858.<sup>20</sup> We know as well that Gleyre was wholly absorbed in his teaching activities in the atelier taken over from Paul Delaroche in 1843 which under Gleyre's leadership would become the most important private studio in Paris.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the specific impetus for developing further the subject did not come about until a decade after the completion of the *Danse des Bacchantes* in the form of an official commission from the *Öffentliche Kunstsammlung* of Basel. The history of the command to Gleyre is still clouded in uncertainty because no letters to and from Gleyre have been found in the museum or cantonal archives, although it is certain that an active correspondence had existed. Similarly, it is not certain whether Gleyre had received the commission directly or had been contacted through intermediary friends, as had been the case with the commission for the *Davel*<sup>22</sup>; nor is it known whether Gleyre kept the authorities in Basel up to date on the numerous delays and changes incurred in the creation of the work. What can be ascer-

tained in regard to this aspect of the history of the painting is gleaned from the *procès-verbaux* of the committee seances in Basel as well as the summary annual reports on the museum's activities.<sup>23</sup>

On December 3, 1859, the central committee of the Basel museum noted in its seance report that they would commission Gleyre for a large work; their decision was based not only on his reputation and Swiss origin, but also on the extraordinary success of the *Romains* in Lausanne in the autumn before.<sup>24</sup> The payment set aside for the project was listed as 10,000 francs – although it was not stipulated as French or Swiss currency – to be drawn from the Samuel Birmann fund, a large financial bequest given to the museum by the Basel born landscape painter to be used to enrich the collection.<sup>25</sup> The only stipulation exercised in the seance of that date was that the work, the subject of which was left to the painter's discretion, be large and dramatic, presumably on the artistic and physical level of the *Romains* in Lausanne. The transaction was duly recorded in the yearly report of the commission's activities on January 14, 1860 by the president Wilhelm Wackernagel, with the additional comment that Gleyre was to produce «ein historisches Gemälde».<sup>26</sup>

No documents have surfaced in Basel or in Paris concerning the command until the spring of that year. It is known that Gleyre at this time was wholly absorbed with his painting *Phryné devant l'aréopage*, which he never terminated

under circumstances that still remain curious<sup>27</sup>, and had already begun work on his large canvas depicting *Hercules et Omphale*, which, as it turned out, would require more work than the painter had thought. Furthermore, between 1858 and 1861, Gleyre suffered from a recurring ophthalmia he had contracted in the Near East and which now had become so severe that he was actually in danger of losing his sight.<sup>28</sup> Yet, from the evidence of friends, it seems that Gleyre was anxious to take on the Basel commission, as is attested to in a letter from Albert de Meuron to his sister Marie, dated April 13, 1860, in which he noted Gleyre's enthusiasm for the project.<sup>29</sup> On May 29, the seance report recorded that Gleyre had accepted the command under the conditions stipulated, but that he chose the story of Pentheus as the subject of the painting.<sup>30</sup> There is no commentary in the Basel documents at this time on the selection of the subject, nor is there any indication that the committee was pleased or displeased with the substitution of a classical theme for an historical one.

The seance for November 17, 1860, the next in which the command to Gleyre is mentioned, makes note of the fact that the painter had sent to Basel a preliminary drawing of the subject.<sup>31</sup> This fact in itself is surprising, since Gleyre

had never sent a study of a commissioned work in any other instance before or after, despite the habitual practice of artists to indicate pictorially for a committee the nature of the subject it had commanded before the work was actually painted. The lacuna of documents provides no clue as to why Gleyre had sent the study. It is feasible that the committee had requested it – although this is not noted in the reports – precisely because the theme of Pentheus was not known pictorially and the committee had expected an historical work, possibly like the *Romains*, depicting an aspect of Swiss history. The nature of the work Gleyre sent is also not known, since Clément does not mention it in his catalogue or text, nor has the actual work surfaced. It is equally not known whether the study Gleyre sent was one of the sketches he had made in the late 1840's which was later returned or another one he had made specifically for the purpose.

On the day after the seance report noted above, ALBERT DE MEURON wrote his father, the famed landscape painter Maximilien, of his visit to Gleyre's atelier, and of the fact that "M. Gleyres [sic] va commencer un tableau qui lui a été commandé par le musée de Bâle..."<sup>32</sup> It is certain, however, that despite Gleyre's intentions, he did not begin work on



Fig. 3 Charles Gleyre, *Penthée poursuivi*, 1860. 27×40 cm, oil on canvas. Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (P. 324).



Fig. 4 Charles Gleyre, *Penthée poursuivi*, 1860. 20×31cm, oil on canvas. Private collection, Switzerland.



Fig. 5 Charles Gleyre, *Penthée poursuivi*, 1863. About 100×200 cm, charcoal on canvas. Present whereabouts unknown.

the commission at this time, a fact much lamented by Wackernagel in his annual report of January 19, 1861.<sup>33</sup> The reasons for the delay cannot be fully explained from the available documents, but it is known that Gleyre was ill for much of the time. Gleyre's friend, the poet JUSTE OLIVIER who acted as the painter's secretary as well, wrote to his cousin Jules Hébert on December 30, 1860, that Gleyre was suffering from a severe case of facial neuralgia which virtually paralysed him for weeks at a time.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, it seems that during the periods when Gleyre could work, he put greater emphasis on completing his *Hercules et Omphale*, despite the fact that it was not a commissioned work. He did not terminate the canvas until late 1862.<sup>35</sup>

It was only at this point, almost three years after Gleyre had received the commission from Basel, that he began earnestly working on the painting. This is confirmed by another letter from Olivier to Hébert dated March 16, 1863 in which he noted that "Gleyre prépare un nouveau tableau, peut-être son Panthée [sic]; mais je crois qu'il en a un autre en tête."<sup>36</sup> From the known chronology of Gleyre's works of this period, it can be ascertained that Olivier's statement that he is preparing the Basel painting is correct since no other known work can be traced in origin to this date. It is sure, as we have seen, that Gleyre had already made various studies of the composition and that the major elements were already in place at this time. It appears that work proceeded steadily and rapidly so that on October 10, 1863, the Paris correspondent for the Swiss journal *La Patrie* could write that Gleyre is in the process finishing the painting.<sup>37</sup> In fact, this report was greatly exaggerated since, as Clément remembered, Gleyre had many difficulties in the final stages of the work, especially in regard to the disposition of the central figure, the landscape, and particularly the sky – all of which, as will be seen, underwent significant changes.<sup>38</sup>

Gleyre continued to work on the canvas through the late months of 1863 and well into the spring of the following year. By April, 1864, the painting was in an advanced state, as Clément remarked from notes he took at that time.<sup>39</sup> But the actual *terminus* date for the work is attested by the Neuchâtel painter EDMOND DE PURY who began to study with Gleyre in 1863. In a letter to his parents, dated June, 1864, de Pury noted that he had been to Gleyre's private studio and had just admired the finished *Penthée*, which, he said, was of such superior quality that it was worth a great deal more than the sum offered by the museum.<sup>40</sup> But despite the fact that for de Pury the work was finished, Gleyre held on to the canvas, presumably for minor adjustments, throughout the year. The committee in Basel did not note the arrival of the painting until February 4, 1865.<sup>41</sup>

#### *Evolution of the work*

From the chronology established above and the extant drawings and esquisses, it is possible to reconstruct with some certainty the development of the painting from its

origins to the finished state. As noted above, Clément had remembered seeing two charcoal drawings of the subject which were executed in the late 1840's: one represented the figure of Pentheus kneeling behind a rock while observing the Dionysiac cult; the other represented Pentheus chased by the frenzied women. These drawings were put into a drawer for later use, but, as Clément noted, they were prey to neglect and the habits of the many animals that inhabited Gleyre's studio. Clément claimed later that because the drawing of the first subject of Pentheus hidden had suffered so badly, Gleyre was forced to use the second as the basis for the Basel commission. We know, however, that these drawings mentioned by Clément were but two of four that Gleyre had prepared on the Pentheus theme. The evidence for this comes from a letter written by CHARLES DENUELLE to Clément on January 3, 1878<sup>42</sup>, which Clément, for unknown reasons, never used in his biography published that year or in the revised version of 1886. Denuelle remarked that the subjects of these drawings were the following: 1) *Penthée caché*; 2) *Penthée découvert*; 3) *Penthée poursuivi*; and 4) *Penthée lacéré*.

It is clear that Gleyre had studied pictorially all of the major elements of the Pentheus story and not only the essential highlights. Of these four drawings, only the first mentioned by Denuelle and Clément has survived (fig. 2).<sup>43</sup> One can understand fully from the cursory sketch why Gleyre did not choose it as the basis for the commission. While it is true that it is in bad physical state and apparently had been already in the 1850's, it must be seriously doubted that this was the principle reason why it was rejected as the basis for a major painting. For while the scene has a certain interest in its depiction, particularly in the landscape forms, it lacks the dramatic quality that is called for in the iconography itself and in the intention of the Basel committee to have a grandiose, theatrical painting close to the spirit of the *Romains* in Lausanne. The same may be said of the subject of Pentheus discovered, while the last element of Pentheus lacerated by his mother would seem too brutal a scene and completely out of the artistic spirit of Gleyre's own artistic philosophy. The use of Pentheus chased, therefore, at once summarizes the chief element of the myth and at the same time provides Gleyre with the opportunity to produce a work that is both profound and dramatic.

Since the drawing of Pentheus chased by the women noted by Clément and Denuelle has not survived and is not described by either author, we cannot know of its original disposition or stylistic components. However, it may be presumed that it resembled in essence the scene Gleyre sketched roughly in oils which served surely as the preliminary esquisse for the command (fig. 3)<sup>44</sup>, although it is not known whether the imagery here corresponded to the sketch Gleyre sent to the Basel committee in November, 1860. The esquisse itself is remarkable in its sense of modernity and clearly demonstrates Gleyre's preoccupying interest in color harmonies and pictorial rhythms. Compared to the finished painting, certain noticeable changes can be readily seen, particularly in the pose of the central figure who here

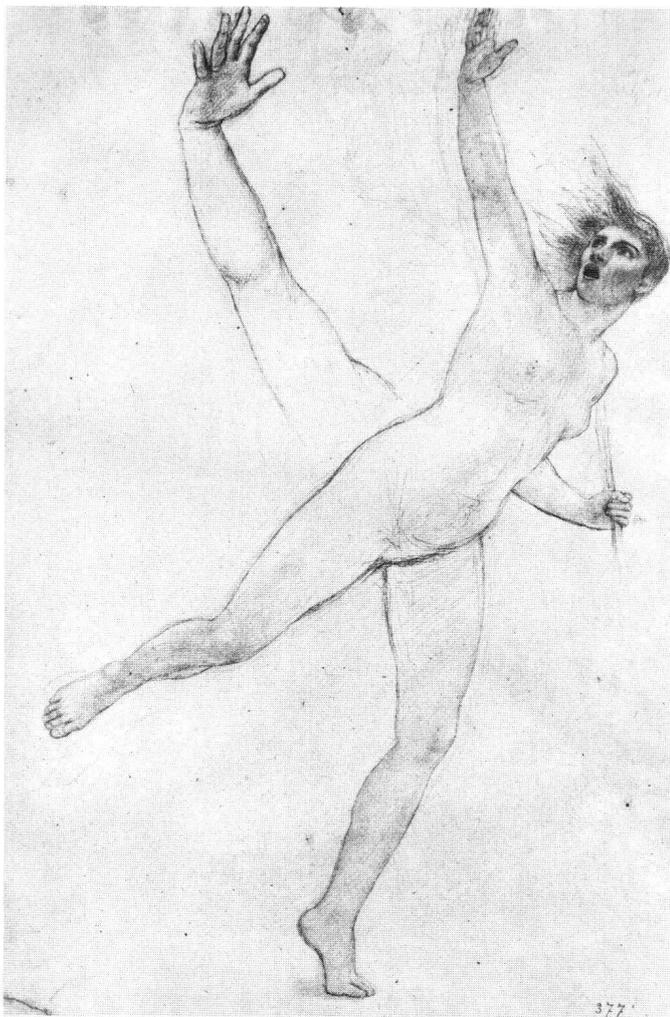


Fig. 6 Charles Gleyre, *Study for Penthée*, 1863. 45,2×39,5 cm, pencil on paper. Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (D. 1166).

is seen with his arms at his side in the gesture of a classical running figure. The female figures at the left are also conceived in the esquisse as banal silhouettes lacking in definition and scope as integral parts of the scene; *pentimenti* of landscape are still visible on the canvas, further evidence of Gleyre's constant search for forms.<sup>45</sup> But Clément is correct here that the composition and especially the attitude of Pentheus lacked in nobility; the gesture of Pentheus' arms gave him the appearance of a "coureur vulgaire".

Gleyre must have quickly realized that the stylistic movement needed in the canvas was a full-blown baroque sweep of action in order to pictorially transmit the sense of grandeur and terror and therefore made two significant changes in the esquisse that followed (fig. 4).<sup>46</sup> Here Pentheus is pushed further to the edge of the canvas and the movement of the running figure is highly accented by the upward arms that visually extend the linear thrust of the action to the border of the frame. This too is further underscored by the attitude of the frenetic women at the left who likewise are

inclined more to the right, following the flow of Pentheus' wake. The figure which had previously been placed on the distant rock at the right is now eliminated so that the compositional flow is pushed into a dramatic diagonal extending from the left to the right, from the persuers to the pursued.

It was here that the final form of the composition was reached, but not, as Clément wrote, without a great deal of effort on Gleyre's part and not without many subtle changes added while the painting was being completed. Gleyre was wholly conscious of the importance of the background in the composition as an emphasis of the action portrayed in the foreground. Accordingly, within these two studies, the painter searched for a long time for a landscape and spatial effect in the sky which would powerfully compliment but not overpower the central theme. The final effect was not reached until Gleyre transferred the design in charcoal onto the prepared canvas for the definitive version of the work to be sent to Basel (fig. 5).<sup>47</sup> The essential elements of the previous esquisse are retained, except that the women are even more acutely inclined in their furious chase so that they appear to defy the laws of gravity; Gleyre also added two eagles in the intermediate space between the women and Pentheus, a further visual accent of the flight portrayed.

It is here as well that Gleyre's concern for the secondary effects created by the landscape and sky can be appreciated. The massive rock formations, primeval in their simple geometric configuration, help to create a timeless setting in which their solidity contrasts strikingly against the fleeting movements of the characters. While the painter ALBERT ANKER would remember later that the rock forms were reminiscent of the landscape seen near Fleurier where Gleyre often stopped in his sojourns to Switzerland<sup>48</sup>, it is more probable that their forms originated in Gleyre's creative imagination in accord with the necessities of the composition. The same may be said of the sky which here takes on a dramatic form that sharply focuses on the movement of the foreground. Unlike the brutal, swirling effect seen in the previous esquisse, the clouded sky is seen in this sketch as a controlled, somber force which accents the women near the horizon and pushes forward towards the flight of Pentheus.

Clément remarked that Gleyre had worked on this version for so long and with so much intensity that it became literally impossible to use the surface for the painting. Consequently, he was forced to reproduce the entire composition once again on another canvas, and in doing so, made further additions in the details which again augment the dramatic quality of the work. Most notably, one can cite the woman at the far left who now in the final version elevates her right arm in a gesture calling her sisters to the chase and also placing more emphasis on the left to right diagonal of movement. Gleyre's sketch of this figure, surely made from the live model (fig. 6)<sup>49</sup>, demonstrates the extreme care the painter took in creating the right gesture and attitude, as does the addition of the tambourine in the raised hand (fig. 7).<sup>50</sup> The two eagles in the final composition are more minutely defined, probably drawn as well from exam-

ples Gleyre must have seen in the Jardin des Plantes (fig. 8)<sup>51</sup>, and add brilliantly to the overall composition in two distinct ways: they at once link the persuers and their quarry, and at the same time create a psychological impact in that the menacing claws of the eagle at the right already prefigures the action of tearing apart which quickly follows the scene.

Although in Clément's analysis of the painting and in his study of the drawings and esquisses he does not note which preceded which, it is evident from the material presented above that a precise chronological flow in the creation of these works can be established. The esquisse here reproduced as figure 3 must be seen as the initial one, followed by the modifications perceived in figure 4. We cannot be certain when these date or how they relate to the sketch produced in the late 1840's. But it is certain that the charcoal sketch produced on canvas, here reproduced as figure 5 must date to the spring of 1863 when the essential, finished elements were already developed; Clément's ascertainment that it dates to 1859 when Gleyre received the commission can only be a lapse of memory.<sup>52</sup>

One of the primary questions in regard to the evolution of the painting is the possible uses of visual sources. Gleyre rarely copied directly or borrowed motifs from other works, although he was known to have been influenced by paintings when the imagery was appropriate to the works he was developing – the use of David's *Socrates* in connection to the attitude of Davel is a blatant example. In the case of his *Penthée*, no direct prototypes of the iconography were available. Yet, a companion subject was known to Gleyre in regard to the image of Orestes pursued by the Furies which contains elements similar to the story of Pentheus and which had been treated by various artists of the nineteenth century. Certainly Gleyre had seen Bouguereau's representation of the subject (fig. 9)<sup>53</sup> when it was exhibited in the

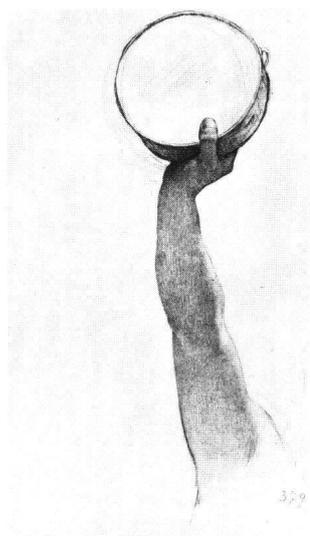


Fig. 7 Charles Gleyre, *Study for Penthée*, 1863. 31,4×18,4 cm, pencil on paper. Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (D. 1168).



Fig. 8 Charles Gleyre, *Study for Penthée*, 1863. 21,5×34,7, pencil on paper. Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (D. 1170).

salon of 1863, significantly just before Gleyre had begun the charcoal sketch on canvas. To be sure, none of the figures in Bouguereau's canvas corresponds directly to those in Gleyre's work, but the former may have helped to define the psychological tone of the *Penthée* in its intense, dramatic quality and somber color.

More direct links may be established between the women and the central figure. As for the former, the attitudes in their modified form, inclined sharply and seemingly defying their own weight, bear a striking resemblance to the persuing figures in an illustration of John Flaxman for Homer's *Odyssey*, *Ulysses Terrified by the Ghosts* (fig. 10).<sup>54</sup> While it is true that there is no extant documentation of Gleyre having had an interest in Flaxman or even owning a copy of his illustrations – in the inventory of his studio, it is noted that he possessed a copy of Homer's works but with no details as to whether they were illustrated<sup>55</sup> – it has recently been shown that the influence of Flaxman in the 19th century in France was more pervasive than had been realized.<sup>56</sup> Given the correspondance of Gleyre's figures with the three ghosts in Flaxman, it seems likely that the latter provided the original visual stimulus for the former.

The figure of Pentheus may likewise be related in pose and attitude to the central angelic messenger in Raphael's well-known fresco in the Vatican, *The Expulsion of Heliodorus* (fig. 11). Gleyre does not mention his interest in Raphael in his Italian journal nor in his letters from Rome, despite the fact that he was known to have spent much time copying the Vatican works; yet, at various stages in his Roman sojourn, he took the opportunity to make studies of other works of Raphael<sup>57</sup>, which were never incorporated into his paintings. In this case Gleyre used the general posture and drapery of the running figure, but transformed into a more horrifying image. The attitude of the raised arms hiding the face, already developed in the second esquisse, is also transposed in the painting from a similar gesture in the fresco behind the messenger. It must be stressed that the Raphael source, like the Flaxman and perhaps the Bouguereau work, provided Gleyre only with the essential

forms which he developed in the canvas to fully suit the imagery appropriate to the iconography. The imaginative confluence of these sources creates what the critic PAUL MANTZ aptly called one of Gleyre's finest paintings in which eloquence, poetry, and drama meet equally in a provocative imagery.<sup>58</sup>

*Appendix: the exhibition of the work*

When Gleyre's painting reached Basel in 1865, it remained on view in the museum, but was never seen in Gleyre's lifetime in Paris, Geneva, or Lausanne, cities in which Gleyre had continuous links. Of Gleyre's friends, only Juste Olivier is known to have gone to Basel to see the work.<sup>59</sup> While it is true that a line engraving of the painting was published in 1873<sup>60</sup>, the relative isolation of the *Penthée*, like the numerous works of the painter's in private collections not seen by the public, remained a concern of Gleyre's friends. Therefore, the attempt to exhibit the work elsewhere should have been met with great enthusiasm and approval in the effort to make the artist's works more available to the public at large; in fact, the very idea of exhibiting the painting outside of Basel represented a formidable obstacle which, it turned out, needed the intercession of high public officials in Basel and Lausanne.

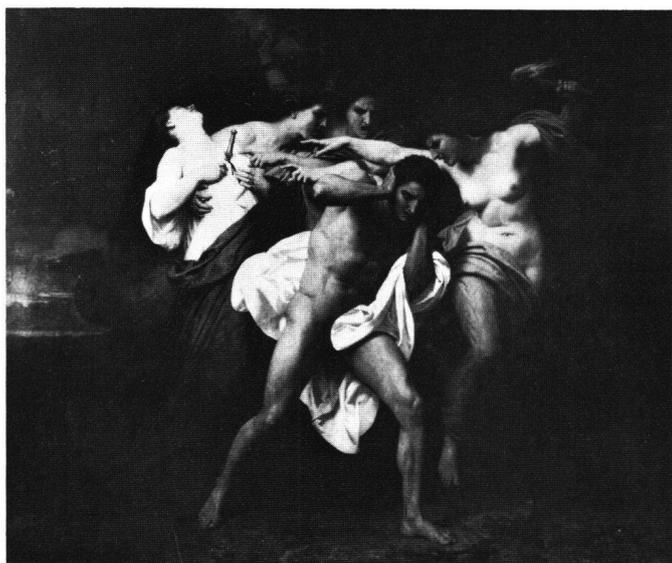


Fig.9 William Bouguereau, *Les Remords d'Oreste*, 1862. 227×278,5 cm, oil on canvas. The Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia USA (Gift of Walter P. Chrysler Jr., Inv. 71.623).

The circumstances revolved around the efforts of the Société Vaudoise des Beaux-Arts and the Musée Arlaud behind its conservator Léon de la Cressonnière to mount a memorial exhibition of Gleyre's works after the artist's abrupt death on May 6, 1874. A committee was formed consisting of de la Cressonnière, the doctor J.-J. Larguier

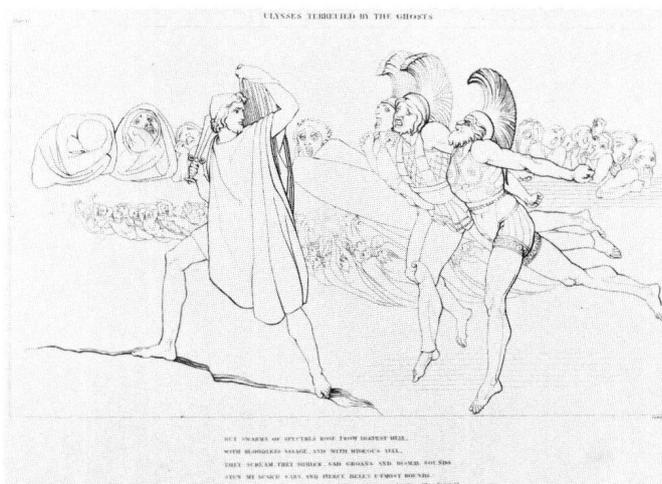


Fig. 10 John Flaxman, *Ulysses terrified by the Ghosts*, 27,8×43 cm, engraving. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut USA (The Paul Mellon Collection).

(whom Gleyre had sketched in Lausanne in 1870), the painters Emile David and Bocion, the politicians Paul Cérésole and Boiceau, the industrialist Adrien Mercier, and Gleyre's close friends Fritz Berthoud and Clément. The purpose was not only to honor the late painter who had especially close ties to the Musée Arlaud – beside the commissions made for the museum, Gleyre had also been asked in the 1840's to be its director<sup>61</sup> – but also to raise funds for a portrait bust to be placed in the museum; the bust in fact would later be executed by the celebrated sculptor Henri Chapu.<sup>62</sup> The organizers of the exhibition wanted to use the core of the Gleyre holdings in the museum as the base of the show, but augmented by those works available in Swiss private and public collections; it was decided that efforts to procure the dozens of works in France would be too costly and time consuming. Collectors such as Vincent Dubochet lent the *Minerve et les trois grâces*, commissioned for his villa in Chailly sur Clarens, and Mercier lent his recently acquired canvases of the *Sapho* and the *Nubienne* and *Diane* diptych. It seemed natural to request the loan of the *Penthée* as well as the *Charmeuse* which the museum in Basel had bought from the art dealer Rudolf Lang in December, 1873.<sup>63</sup>

On June 3, 1874, de la Cressonnière wrote to the Basel art commission officially requesting the two works for the Lausanne exhibition, informing them that the Musée Arlaud would take all the risks, properly insure the paintings, and even hire special guards in the museum halls to protect the paintings from the adoring crowds.<sup>64</sup> Nine days later, de la Cressonnière received a reply from Edouard His-Heusler, the president of the Basel arts commission, informing him that the committee “n'est pas favorable à votre projet”; he explained later in the letter that there is an article “de notre règlement qui nous interdit d'envoyer à des expositions... des œuvres d'art qui font partie de notre musée”.<sup>65</sup> The policy of not lending important works to



Fig. 11 Raphael, *The Expulsion of Heliiodorus*, Fresco. The Vatican.

other Swiss museums, even in special circumstances, was not unique to Basel at this time. De la Cressonnière was well aware of this reticence to lend and had even exercised it himself in regard to the *Romains passant sous le joug*. In April, 1869, M. Gay, the president of the Société des amis des Beaux-arts of Geneva had written to Ruchonnet, then the head of the Département de l'instruction publique et des cultes in Lausanne, requesting permission to borrow the Gleyre canvas for a small exhibition in the Athenée in Geneva; on April 15, de la Cressonnière wrote a long letter to Ruchonnet explaining why this was impossible, how it violated the regulations of the Conseil d'état, and it would likely set a precedent that would be difficult to follow in the future.<sup>66</sup> Yet, exceptions were made as in the case with the museum of Neuchâtel which also explicitly banned loans of its works. Here, however, when de la Cressonnière had requested the *Hercules et Omphale* for the memorial exhibition of 1874, he was told by Albert de Meuron, the president of the arts committee, that he would vigorously use his influence among the other members to permit the canvas to be seen in the Lausanne exhibition<sup>67</sup>; the painting was in fact sent shortly afterwards with no further administrative difficulties.

The refusal from Basel forced de la Cressonnière to apply political pressure in the hopes of changing the minds of the Basel committee. On June 18, 1874, he wrote to Ruchonnet

saying that the only way in which the Basel commission might change its mind in this instance would be if the affair were handled through the respective governmental agencies in charge.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, on June 23, the president of the Conseil d'état in Lausanne, Jean-Louis Chuard, wrote to his counterpart in Basel, Herrn Höchlin, asking whether he could intercede in the matter so that an exception could be made under the circumstance of honoring "notre peintre national".<sup>69</sup> It is not readily known how much influence Höchlin had exercised or even how much interest he took in the affair, but on June 30, either de la Cressonnière or Chuard – it is not clear in the documents which one – received another negative reply, once again emphasizing the ban on loans.<sup>70</sup> De la Cressonnière persisted with another letter the next day, reiterating the importance of the exhibition and the central role of the *Penthee*, but to no avail.<sup>71</sup>

It was at this point that Paul Cérésole, who was a member of the Lausanne committee and for the year 1873 president of the Confederation, interceded in the problem, although he was well aware of the difficulties from the beginning.<sup>72</sup> On July 9, he wrote from Bern to Höchlin asking him to apply whatever political pressure necessary to reverse the decision of the arts committee. He noted as well that all requests for loans from other museums and from private collectors had been granted with the notable exception of Basel.<sup>73</sup> Once again, His-Heusler replied on July 13 affirming

the refusal.<sup>74</sup> In a separate letter to Cérésolle on July 15, he added that under no circumstances could he break the rule and noted further that “nous sommes liés par sept précédents entre autre par un refus fait à Gleyre même quand il était en vie”.<sup>75</sup>

It should be noted at this point that the scheduled opening of the exhibition in Lausanne had been set for August 15. The impending deadline made it imperative to act quickly if the two works were to be included. As a result a series of telegrams was exchanged between Cérésolle and Bischoff, the Staatsschreiber of the canton of Basel, redefining the scope of the exhibition and the importance of having the *Penthée* included; Cérésolle stressed repeatedly that immediate intervention was crucial.<sup>76</sup> There are no further details available in the documents on precisely what had happened afterwards in Basel, but apparently Bischoff's appeals were

finally instrumental in changing the views of the committee; for it is noted in the minutes of the Conseil d'état séance in Lausanne for July 17 that Basel had agreed to lend the pictures in question.<sup>77</sup> De la Cressonnière wrote to Bischoff on July 21 asking that the works be in Lausanne no later than August 10, and also sent a personal letter to the Basel committee thanking it for changing its mind.<sup>78</sup> The *Penthée* and the *Charmeuse* were crated for shipment by the Basler Transportversicherungs Gesellschaft and insured for 30,000 and 20,000 francs respectively. De la Cressonnière wrote to Bischoff on August 4 that the works were expected in Lausanne shortly and that he would personally supervise their transport from the station to the museum. The final correspondence in the affair was a telegram from Fritz Berthoud on behalf of the Lausanne committee to Bischoff expressing its gratitude for his assistance in procuring the works for the Lausanne exhibition.<sup>79</sup>

#### NOTES

- 1 ALBERT BOIME, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, London 1971.
- 2 The new research into these areas of nineteenth century art is too vast to list, but for a summary see: WILLIAM HAUPTMAN, *19th Century in Europe and America*, in: *Encyclopedia of World Art*, New York, 1983, XVI, pp. 223–238, especially the bibliography which examines the new areas of study up to 1980.
- 3 *Charles Gleyre ou les illusions perdues*, catalogue of the exhibition in Winterthur, 1974; *Charles Gleyre 1806–1874*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Grey Art Gallery, New York University, February 6 to March 22, 1980.
- 4 Gautier's comments were made in his review of the salon of 1845 in: *La Presse*, March 19, 1845. – The sentiment was echoed by E. BERGOUNIOUX, *Le Salon de 1845*, in: *Revue de Paris*, III, 1845, p. 479.
- 5 See: WILLIAM HAUPTMAN, *Allusions and Illusions in Gleyre's Le Soir*, in: *The Art Bulletin* 60, no. 2, June 1978, pp. 321–330.
- 6 HIPPOLYTE TAINE, *Gleyre*, in: *Derniers essais critique et d'histoire*, Paris, 1903, pp. 283 (but first published in: *Journal des débats*, April 11–12, 1878).
- 7 The questions of Gleyre's historical iconographic innovations in the context of the commission for *Le Major Davel* was treated by WILLIAM HAUPTMAN in a lecture at the Palais de Rumine, Lausanne, on March 18, 1982: «Le Major Davel de Gleyre ou la naissance d'un chef-d'œuvre vaudois.»
- 8 See: CHARLES CLÉMENT, *Charles Gleyre, étude biographique et critique*, Genève, Neuchâtel et Paris 1878, p. 102, in which he discusses the idea for the painting, representing the past, the present, and the future which Gleyre thought about in Egypt after his two meetings with the spiritual head of the movement, le Père Enfantin. Gleyre also drew his portrait in January, 1835; the sketch is in the Lowell Foundation on loan to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. BMFA 70.49.
- 9 On the history of these works, see: NANCY SCOTT NEWHOUSE, *From Rome to Khartoum: Gleyre, Lowell, and the Evidence of the Boston Watercolors and Drawings*, in: *Charles Gleyre 1806–1874* (cf. note 3), pp. 79f.
- 10 See especially: P. HARTWIG, *Der Tod des Pentheus*, in: *Jahrbuch des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archeologischen Instituts*, VII, 1892, pp. 153–164; L. CURTIUS, *Pentheus*, Berlin und Leipzig 1929. – For the ancient vase paintings, see: F. BROMMER, *Vasenlisten zur griechischen Heldensage*, Marburg 1973, pp. 485f.
- 11 The major example is LECOMTE DE LISLE's undated poem “Penthée”, published in: *Poésies complètes*, Paris 1927,

- pp. 180–1. A review of A. PIGLER, *Barockthemen*, Budapest 1974, indicates no listing of the subject known in later art.
- 12 EURIPIDES, *The Bacchae* and OVID, *Metamorphosis*, III. The Euripides play appeared in a new, revised translation by Nicholas-Louis Artaud and was reissued in 1852 and 1857. The story of Pentheus also appears in NONNUS, *Dionysiaca*, which Gleyre surely did not know.
- 13 Pentheus disguised in female dress appears only in Euripides; Ovid makes no mention of it. As will be seen later, Gleyre had made a sketch of Pentheus in this form, thus indicating the Greek rather than the Roman source.
- 14 CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), p. 297f.
- 15 It is not known for certain when Gleyre and Clément had actually met or under which circumstances. In the introduction to his biography, Clément notes that the association between the two goes back about 30 years. The Clément letters in the Clément Family Collection, Fleurier, provide no clue, except that the meeting was arranged by the Swiss poet Juste Olivier who settled in Paris permanently in 1846.
- 16 See, besides those already noted above in note 4: PAUL MANTZ, *Salon de 1845*, in: *L'Artiste*, March 30, 1845, p. 194; ALPHONSE ESQUIROS, *Le Salon de 1845*, in: *Revue de Paris*, May 10, 1845, p. 63; FABIEN PILLET, *Le Salon de 1845*, in: *Le Moniteur universel*, March 17, 1845, p. 777. The only major critic to denounce the work was Baudelaire in his youthful review, *Salon de 1845*, in: *Œuvres complètes*, Paris 1923, p. 34. On the history of the painting and its commission, see Archives Nationales, Paris, F<sup>21</sup>, 33, dossier 7.
- 17 The work is now in the Licht Family Collection, Boston, and studied briefly in: HAUPTMAN, *Charles Gleyre: Tradition and Innovation*, in: *Charles Gleyre 1806–1874* (cf. note 3), p. 27. The work was painted for the critic and writer Arsène Houssaye.
- 18 Now in a private collection, Switzerland, and discussed briefly in: HAUPTMAN (cf. note 3), p. 28.
- 19 The history of this important work has yet to be written, but see: CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), pp. 191f. The painting was seen briefly in the salon of 1849, registered as no. 3736 (Archives du Louvre, *Enregistrement des ouvrages* 1849, KK<sup>43</sup>), but Gleyre himself withdrew the picture from the exhibition on July 19 (Arch. du Louvre, Dossier X, 1849, *Etat des ouvrages retirés pendant l'exposition*). From then on, the work rested in Spain, unseen during Gleyre's lifetime. Already when the painting was still in an incomplete state, his friends had hoped that the work would be seen by the public and not sent to Spain, as is

- evidenced in a letter from Madame Caroline Olivier to Clément on February 2, 1849 (Clément Family Collection). It is known in a letter from Paul Cérésolle to Clément of September 17, 1874 that the painting, measuring some 3×2 meters, was in the Palais Royal of Madrid, no. 4222, but placed in an obscure corner where it could not be readily seen. Presently, the work is in a private collection, New York, but on loan to the University of Virginia Art Gallery, Charlottesville.
- 20 As Above, the full history of these important works has yet to be written, but see the basic information in: CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), pp. 223f. On the *Romains* in particular, see the dossier K, XIII/63 in the Archives Cantonales, Lausanne.
- 21 WILLIAM HAUPTMAN, *Delaroches and Gleyre's Teaching Ateliers and Their Group Portraits*, in: *Studies in History of Art* (The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.), vol. 18, pp. 79–119.
- 22 Although Clément is not certain on the use of an intermediate agent for the commission of the *Davel*, a letter from Louis Arlaud, the founder and director of the Musée Arlaud, Lausanne, dated October 17, 1844 to Emile David in Paris clarifies the latter's role in the history of the commission. The letter is in a private collection, Lausanne, but with a copy deposited in the Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire, Département des manuscrits, Lausanne, IS 4540.
- 23 These are contained in two sources: *Protokoll der Kunstsammlung*, I, for the years 1842 to 1881, housed in the library of the Kunstmuseum, Basel; *Erziehungsakten* (Ausstellungskorrespondenz), located in the Staatsarchiv des Kantons Basel-Stadt, DD/7 and DD/7b. For the latter, I wish to express my gratitude to Herr Ulrich Barth for his aid in my research in the archives.
- 24 *Protokoll*, I, p. 83. On the enormous success of the *Romains* in Lausanne, see the documentation in the Archives Cantonales, Lausanne, K, XIII/63, as well as the dozens of local newspaper reports.
- 25 On Birmann, see: SKL I, pp. 137–8. On the importance of the Birmann legacy, valuable information was given to me by Herr Klaus Hess of the Kunstmuseum Basel.
- 26 *Erziehungsakten* (cf. note 23), DD/7b.
- 27 On the problems surrounding the completion of the work, see HAUPTMAN in: *Charles Gleyre 1806–1874* (cf. note 3), p. 46, and on Gérôme's part in the affair, see J.H. VAN WALDEGG, *Jean-Léon Gérômes "Phryné vor den Richtern"* in: *Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen* 17, 1972, pp. 122f.
- 28 CLÉMENT, pp. 285–6.
- 29 Archives de l'état, Neuchâtel, Fond de Meuron, 69<sup>iv</sup>
- 30 *Protokoll* (cf. note 23), I, p. 89.
- 31 *Protokoll* (cf. note 23), I, p. 96.
- 32 Archives de l'état, Neuchâtel, Fond de Meuron, 68<sup>iii</sup>
- 33 *Erziehungsakten* (cf. note 23), DD/7.
- 34 The letter is in a private collection, Lausanne, but see CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), p. 283.
- 35 Although the work is dated by Gleyre 1863 – as written on the column at the left – a letter from Albert Ehrmann, Gleyre's friend and the head of the teaching atelier, to his father dated December 13, 1862, indicates that the work was already completed; the letter is in a private collection, Chalons-sur-Marne. In PIERRE DAX, *Chronique*, in: *L'Artiste*, February 1, 1863, it is noted that the painting had been on view at Goupil's since early January.
- 36 Private collection, Lausanne.
- 37 *Notice* in: *La Patrie*, no. 177, October 10, 1863, p. 2.
- 38 CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), p. 300.
- 39 *Ibid.* p. 304.
- 40 Archives de l'état, Neuchâtel, Fond de Pury, unnumbered dossier. CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), p. 304 notes the termination date as August, 1864. But from the documentation in the Clément Family Collection, it can be seen that Clément was not in Paris during the summer months and could not have seen the painting at this time.
- 41 *Protokoll* (cf. note 23), I, p. 140.
- 42 The letter is in the Clément Family Collection. Charles Denuelle was the brother of Alexandre Denuelle, the architect and designer, who remained a close friend of Gleyre and his circle for almost three decades. Little is known of Charles or his activities. M. Christian Melchoir-Bonnet, Paris, who is indirectly related to the Denuelle family through the marriage of Hippolyte Taine to Alexandre Denuelle's daughter, kindly transmitted to me that no information on Charles is known from his family archives. Charles, however, was known to have visited Gleyre's studio regularly and in 1878 had owned at least seven of the painter's works.
- 43 CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), catalogue no. 192; the work is presently in the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts (MCBA), Lausanne, D.1055.
- 44 CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), catalogue no. 92; MCBA P. 1324.
- 45 CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), notes in the catalogue entry above (cf. note 44) that the *pentimenti* are due to the fact that Gleyre had actually sketched in the scene of Pentheus surprised. Under the circumstances outlined in the text on the selection of the Pentheus theme, I suspect that Clément is mistaken here.
- 46 CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), catalogue no. 91; the work is now in a private collection, Chur.
- 47 The picture itself has not been located even through the efforts of the Alioth family who had bought the study some years after its completion; see CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), p. 300. The work measures about 1×2 meters. From a letter in the Clément Family Collection, it can be shown that Clément was influential in having Achille Alioth of Arlesheim buy the picture from Gleyre. Alioth was also a family friend of the Olivier's after 1853 and is often mentioned as a frequent visitor to the Olivier house in Paris; see the Olivier correspondence in the Département des manuscrits, BCU, Lausanne, IS 1905, under the dossiers by year. The last known exhibition of the work was in 1883 in Zurich; EXPOSITION NATIONALE SUISSE, Zurich, 1883, p. 39, No. 632.
- 48 ANKER mentions it in a letter to Ehrmann, dated "été 1874", and cited in MARIE QUINCHE-ANKER, *Le Peintre Albert Anker 1831–1890, d'après sa correspondance*, Berne, 1924, p. 108. – Fleurier was the native village of Gleyre's friend Fritz Berthoud where he had maintained a summer house. Clément often went there as well and later established himself in the house after his marriage in 1868 to Berthoud's adopted daughter Angèle.
- 49 CLÉMENT (cf. note 8), catalogue no. 377; Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, MCBA D.1166.
- 50 *Ibid.*, no. 379; MCBA D.1168.
- 51 *Ibid.*, no. 382; MCBA D.1170.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p. 300, dates the sketch to 1859, but as has been shown, the date is too early. It is clear as well from the numbering in Clément's catalogue that chronological considerations were not taken into account here.
- 53 The work, now in the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia, was shown in the salon of 1863, livret no. 227. ERIC ZAFRAN, *French Salon Painting from Southern Collections*, catalogue of the exhibition, The High Museum, Atlanta, January 21 to March 3, 1983, pp. 54f; *William Bouguereau*, catalogue of the exhibition, Musée du Petit Palais, Paris, February 9–May 6, 1984, pp. 161–3.
- 54 The work is plate 17 of the *Odyssey*, Book XI, quoting from Pope's translation for lines 779f.
- 55 The inventory of Gleyre's atelier, 94, rue du Bac, is contained in the Archives Nationales, Paris, Minutier central, XXXVI, under the notaire Bezançon, "Inventaire après le décès de M. Gleyre."
- 56 See in particular SARAH SYMMONS, *Flaxman and the Continent*, in: DAVID BINDMAN ed., *John Flaxman*, London 1979, p. 152f.
- 57 Various examples can be seen in Gleyre's unpublished Italian *carnets* in the Musée d'art et d'histoire, Genève, Inv. nos. 1918–5 and 1918–6.
- 58 PAUL MANTZ, *Charles Gleyre*, in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1875, pp. 410–11.

- <sup>59</sup> In a letter from Olivier to his wife Caroline, September 16, 1868, in the Département des manuscrits of the Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire de Lausanne, IS 1905/ct 44, doss. 1868.
- <sup>60</sup> In *La Suisse Illustrée*, no. 9, March 1, 1873, between pp. 102–3. This is the first known illustration of the work in a public journal. Gleyre's friend, the photographer Martens, had made photographs of the work as well as certain studies, but these were never circulated.
- <sup>61</sup> The offer came from Henri Druey to Gleyre in a letter of October 25, 1845, now in the Département des manuscrits of the Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire de Lausanne, IS 3442 (Archives Druey). Gleyre turned down the offer; the directorship went to Guignard.
- <sup>62</sup> The bust was made from the profits of the exhibition which Anker noted, in the same letter cited in note 48 above, as being about 15,000 francs. Actually the figure was 12,756.50 as noted by De la Cressonnière in a letter to Clément on October 12, 1874, now in the Clément Family Collection. The bust was formally inaugurated in the Musée Arlaud on November 21, 1876 with speeches by Cérésolle, Boiceau, and F. Berthoud.
- <sup>63</sup> The work was bought for 10,000 francs, using the Birman funds as well; see *Erziehungsakten* (cf. note 23), DD/7 in a report from His-Heusler dated January 17, 1874 (Bericht über die öffentliche Kunstsammlung für das Jahr 1873). Rudolf Lang had also owned the *Sapho* which he sold to the industrialist Adrien Mercier.
- <sup>64</sup> *Erziehungsakten* (cf. note 23), DD/7b.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid, where the letter, in French, is copied.
- <sup>66</sup> The request for the *Romains* in 1869 was the second one made by the Geneva society: the first, by M. Turretini, was made on August 29, 1858 and was also refused, as noted in a letter in the GLEYRE ARCHIVES, Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne [MCBA] doss. 1009 and in the PROCÈS-VERBAUX DE LA COMMISSION DES BEAUX-ARTS, Lausanne, in the Archives Cantonales, K XIII/54<sup>2</sup>, no. 21, item no. 9, for the séance of September 8, 1858. De la Cressonnière's reply to Ruchonnet in 1869 is in the GLEYRE ARCHIVES, doss. 1000 as is Ruchonnet's reply to M. Gay (in draft form). It might be noted in this instance that de la Cressonnière had also refused the loan of the *Romains* in

- 1872 to the Exposition Universelle in Vienna; his refusal is contained in a letter of October 25, 1872 addressed to M. Estoppey, the head of the Département de l'instruction publique et des cultes and is housed in the GLEYRE ARCHIVE, MCBA, doss. 1010. In this case, however, it is implied in the letter that he had had the approval of Gleyre himself.
- <sup>67</sup> PROCÈS-VERBAUX DU MUSÉE DE PEINTURE, Neuchâtel, 1868–1893, I, in the museum archives, for the séance of June 5, 1874. De Meuron's letter to de la Cressonnière is in the GLEYRE ARCHIVES (cf. note 66), doss. 1011.
- <sup>68</sup> The letter is in the same dossier as noted above in n. 67.
- <sup>69</sup> *Erziehungsakten* (cf. note 23), DD/7.
- <sup>70</sup> *Protokoll* (cf. note 23), I, p. 200.
- <sup>71</sup> *Erziehungsakten* (cf. note 23), DD/7 for July 1, 1874, with no response indicated here.
- <sup>72</sup> Cérésolle had been kept up to date by Clément, as is indicated in various letters in the Clément Family Collection. Already on June 27, Cérésolle had written to Clément that it would be much better if the affair were handled on a political level rather than between the two museums. He also told Clément about his futile efforts to convince the Louvre to lend the *Illusions perdues*; even the ambassador Johann Kern could not dissuade the Louvre officials.
- <sup>73</sup> *Erziehungsakten* (cf. note 23), DD/7.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>75</sup> A copy of the letter is kept in the *Penthee* dossier in the Kunstmuseum, Basel. I have not been able to establish which works by Gleyre were refused or for what purpose, although it may have been for the 1872 Exposition Universelle in Vienna.
- <sup>76</sup> *Erziehungsakten* (cf. note 23), DD/7.
- <sup>77</sup> Recorded in the *Registre des délibérations*, Conseil d'état, Book 183, p. 174, item 126, Archives du Conseil d'état, Lausanne.
- <sup>78</sup> Both letters are recorded in the *Erziehungsakten* (cf. note 23), DD/7.
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid.

I should like to thank the "Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique", Bern, for its generous assistance in the preparation of this article and in the aid given in the preparation of the Gleyre catalogue raisonné.

#### PROOF OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1: Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel.  
 Fig. 2, 3, 6–8: Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, Zürich.  
 Fig. 4, 5: William Hauptman, Lausanne.  
 Fig. 9: The Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia.  
 Fig. 10: Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.  
 Fig. 11: Musei Vaticani, Archivio Fotografico.

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Beitrag befasst sich mit der Auftragserteilung, der Entstehungsgeschichte und der Ikonographie des von Charles Gleyre 1864–65 für das Kunstmuseum Basel geschaffenen Gemäldes «Pentheus von den Mänaden verfolgt». Besonderes Gewicht wird dabei auf die Entwicklung des Themas in chronologischer Hinsicht gelegt sowie auf dessen exemplarische Bedeutung für die Bilderfindung bei Gleyre. Anhand neu aufgefundener Dokumente in Basel, Neuenburg und Lausanne ist der künstlerische Entstehungsprozess dieses Bildes besonders gut zu verfolgen. Es wird daraus deutlich, dass Gleyre beim Pentheusbild auf keine thematischen Vorbilder zurückgreifen konnte. In einem Anhang kommt die harzige Ausleihe des Kunstwerks von Basel an die Gleyre-Ausstellung von 1874 im Musée Arlaud in Lausanne zur Darstellung.

## RÉSUMÉ

La contribution traite de la commande, la genèse et l'iconographie de la peinture «Penthée poursuivi par les Ménades» créée par Charles Gleyre dans les années 1864–65 pour le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bâle. Un poids tout particulier est donné au développement chronologique du thème et à l'importance exemplaire de l'imagination de Gleyre. L'évolution artistique de la création de cette œuvre peut être suivie remarquablement au moyen de nouveaux documents trouvés à Bâle, à Neuchâtel et à Lausanne. L'on peut en tirer que créant cette peinture, Gleyre n'a pu se baser sur des modèles thématiques. En annexe, l'auteur décrit les nombreuses difficultés qui se sont opposées à Bâle au prêt de l'œuvre pour l'exposition de Gleyre présentée en 1874 au Musée Arlaud à Lausanne.

## RIASSUNTO

Il saggio si occupa dell'incarico, della genesi e dell'iconografia del quadro «Penteo inseguito dalle menadi» creato da Charles Gleyre negli anni 1864–65 per il Museo d'Arte di Basilea. Con attenzione particolare si studia lo sviluppo cronologico del soggetto e l'importanza esemplare dell'immaginazione di Gleyre. L'evoluzione artistica della creazione di quest'opera può essere osservata molto bene in base ai documenti rinvenuti recentemente a Basilea, Neuchâtel e Losanna. Si rivela che Gleyre non poteva ricorrere con questo quadro ad esempi tematici. Nell'appendice sono descritte le numerose difficoltà che si presentarono a causa del prestito dell'opera da Basilea all'esposizione di Gleyre del 1874 nel Museo Arlaud a Losanna.

## SUMMARY

The text concerns itself with the commission, history and iconography of Gleyre's painting "Penthée poursuivi", created in 1864–65 for the Kunstmuseum, Basle. Special emphasis is attached to the establishment of the chronology of the theme and the importance of the subject as an index of Gleyre's imaginative use of subject matter. Newly found documents in Basle, Neuchâtel, and Lausanne are used to develop the manner in which Gleyre created a work that turned out to have no contemporary pictorial precedents. An appendix is added to relate the problems associated with the lending of the picture to the Musée Arlaud, Lausanne for a memorial exhibition of Gleyre's work in 1874.