

Dr. Ross Brendle

ART 202.01

2 May 2022

Final Essay

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Neoclassicism and Romanticism ran parallel to one another. These styles presented two ways of looking at the world, both serving distinct purposes in society. Neoclassicism and Romanticism describe not only a stylistic manner but also a point of view. Romanticism celebrates the individual and the emotional, while Neoclassicism celebrates the universe and the logical. Neoclassicism often tended to be in the form of public art, while Romanticism tended to be a personal form of art.

For the most part, both styles were reactionary to the periods which had preceded them or had already begun in Europe. Neoclassicism desired to present Classical ideals and portray subject matter in an approach derived from Greek and Roman sources. The name and many of the themes of Romanticism are derived from the stories and poems written in Romance languages. Neoclassical artists illustrated different scenes and figures with clear structure and composition, displaying subject matter precisely as the viewer would naturally perceive them. Romantic artists presented the climax of their subject matter through the use of bold colors that were often brighter or even darker than they naturally appeared.

Oath of Horatii by Jacques-Louis David is an example of Neoclassicism, and *Third of May, 1808* by Francisco Goya is an example of Romanticism. David and Goya's works of art have a variety of differences concerning aspects such as the meaning and form and many similarities in imagery and symbols. *Oath of Horatii* and *Third of May, 1808* are considered

history paintings. History paintings are based on historical, mythological, or biblical narratives and generally convey a high moral or intellectual idea. The subject of David's painting was inspired by the drama *Horace*, which had been based on ancient Roman historical text. Goya's painting portrays the mass execution of Spanish individuals by a French firing squad that occurred on May 3rd. Neoclassical artists conveyed their thoughts through myths and legends, while Romantic artists depicted the reality of their surroundings through expressive art.

David's Neoclassical *Oath of Horatii* is an academic representation of civic sacrifice, unlike Goya's *Third of May, 1808*, an illustration of pure terror and desperation - critical characteristics of Romanticism. The pose of the brothers in David's painting is similar to that of the soldiers in Goya's. While the poses of the figures are similar, they differ however due to the fact that Goya's soldiers face away from the viewer, transforming David's patriotic fighters into an anonymous killing machine. Little to no emphasis is put on emotion within *Oath of Horatii*, but instead, the men's muscular angularity and brute strength are highlighted through their heroic pose. The loose brushwork and lifelike poses found in *Third of May, 1808*, create a sense of movement and humanity which emphasizes the hopeless rage that was felt by the Spanish individuals. The overall composition of David's painting consists of hard lines, with much detail so that little to no brush strokes could be seen, a characteristic of Neoclassicism showing off the artist's desire for viewers to clearly understand the subject matter.

The overall composition of Goya's painting consists of rough and board brush strokes, which created softer lines and allowed for an "action shot" rather than a static moment, a characteristic of Romanticism showing off the artist's desire to portray the emotional reality of what was happening around them.