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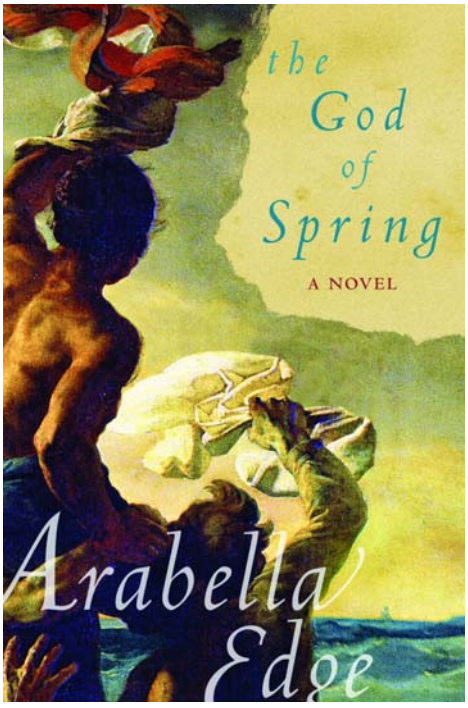
NOTES FOR READING GROUPS

Arabella Edge

THE GOD OF SPRING



Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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THEMATIC AND PLOT SUMMARY

'But now it occurred to him that the truth lay elsewhere, beyond his reach, in a great humming murmur of other voices shifting, halting and starting up again, finding their echo in the soft susurrations of the sea. In the stories of the dead, even, carried through the tireless tides of the deep.' (p 134)

This novel is about the part that moral, artistic and political integrity play in human survival. It's about the fleeting nature of fame and adulation and the fear of being forgotten. Living is always a compromise between the desire to do good and the desire to survive. History has shown that people are never sure which is the right way to live or whether their actions will be construed as fine and noble, or callow and cowardly. We tell stories of our own intentions; we guess at those of others; we create novels and paintings which attempt to re-create the events of the past by interpreting them in our own way. Théodore Géricault's life is a portrait of these oppositions, and his painting 'The Raft of the *Medusa* ' is a visual representation of the same conflicts. What price fame and fortune? Can there be nobility in failure or death? Who are the heroes? Who are the ignominious? Which artists will survive in the public memory and which will be forgotten? This novel traverses these intersections in its four themes - **Théo's doomed love affair; his survival as an artist of note; Savigny and Corréard's survival on the raft; and France's treatment of its people and its deposed leaders.**

Morality features here as the personal conflict between romantic passion and creative satisfaction which characterized the life of Théodore Géricault(1791-1824), who was regarded as the leader of the French Romantic Movement. This novel fictionalises his life, in describing the nature of the creative muse and the demands it makes on an individual and on those of the people around them. How should he behave in a world in which both his passions create dissension amongst his loved ones? Torn between his lustful passion for Alexandrine, the wife of his uncle and benefactor Charles Caruel, and his art (which must ride the waves of political favour), he is for a time completely distracted by physical desire. His guilt is compounded by the fact that it was his uncle who interceded with Théo's father to allow him to reject a place in the family tobacco firm for a life dedicated to art, and supported by his mother's legacy: 'How could he transform his benefactor into a cuckold, a latrine joke of the cheapest kind? (p 23) His award of the Emperor's Gold Medal for *Charging Chasseur* had seemed to vindicate his father's decision, but since then Théo has wallowed in this sordid affair which has drained him of inspiration. Beginning to despair that despite the freedom afforded by his wealth, he has wasted his talents as he 'ran through each day as if letting out rope' (p 30), he chances upon the story of the wreck of the *Medusa* (p 31) on the Arguin Bank off the coast of Senegal and his inspiration is set alight. He learns that the ship had been badly mismanaged by its Captain Monsieur Hugues Duroy de Chaummareys, and that despite the efforts of Mister Reynaud and La Touche ('it is not the *sea* which is a danger but the *shore* ' (p 68)) they were run aground after the Captain foolishly gave the wheel to a crony named Richefort who like himself had been in exile and lacked any recent experience in navigation. Two of the fifteen survivors cast off on a makeshift raft by the rest of the crew, the doctor Henry Savigny and the cartographer and surveyor Alexandre Corréard, are living in appalling conditions as they attempt to make a case against The Ministry of Marine whose policies led to their near deaths, by writing a book (p 54), but Géricault is so incensed and inspired that he offers them lodging with him.

'Lately he was beginning to notice something furtive in his own gestures, which he did not like.'(p 5) Love or lust can make us commit duplicitous actions, and even hate the

object of this desire. Géricault is ambivalent about his ‘scheming' temptress with ‘her theatrical laugh, which he was beginning to fear' (p 10) and whose enquiries whilst he was away in Rome he considers ‘indiscreet' (p 35). He contrasts theirs with the imaginary contentment of an open relationship: ‘If only they could talk nonsense by the fire over a glass of anisette, but there was no time for sweet untroubled sleep or even endearments' (p 12)…‘Everywhere he looked he saw lovers whirling past as if partnered in some waltzing dance. Even the pigeons bowing and cooing across the path seemed to mock his solitary state.' (p 46) Even when making love, he's distracted by his art (pp 78-9) and laments that she will never understand his inspiration (pp 123-4). He ‘wanted to take her with the lazy familiarity that a married couple might have' (p 125) but instead is forced into hurried clandestine embraces which are beginning to pall. When she challenges him to declare his love, he lies, knowing that ‘together they had crossed the thresholds of their youth and he had squandered her life just like any man.' (p 147) He realises that they had never strolled in his gardens, but been ‘enclosed in darkened rooms, feverish and whispering behind closed doors.' (p 203) He'd never loved her (p 204) and regrets the wasted years. (p 238) In essence it is his art which Théo loves and he blames her for distracting him from it for so long. (p 173) He feels relief when their affair ends, ‘He was free to paint at last.' (p 196) When the men ask him to paint a rescue scene (p 268) he compares their plight to his relationship, thinking ‘No divine intervention there, no ship reuniting them at the eleventh hour.' (p 269) His affair is a wreck, like the ship *Medusa*, and like the nation of France.

‘He needed something, anything to work into a tableau; he longed to be anchored to some sense of purpose at last. There lay the problem, he thought. France had run out of stories: the restoration, that flimsy painted prop of Royalty, had brought them full circle, with nothing new to tell.'(p 39) The historical background to this novel, which begins in 1818, is the French Revolution, the rise of Napoleon, his coronation as Emperor, his disastrous Russian campaign and the restoration of the French monarchy, which also relates to Géricault's plight as a man and an artist. The detritus left behind is that of a country still reeling from decades of unrest. There are returned soldiers who have been forced like Col Louis Bros to fall upon the mercy of patrons such as Horace Vernet who uses him as a model. (pp 31-2) Society is full of broken men and women: ‘Géricault hurried past the amputees, the war veterans of Napoleon's Grande Armée who lifted glasses to their lips with shaking hands. Géricault averted his eyes from the look of blank shock on those young faces.' (p 38) Returned aristocrats have taken their places in positions for which their enforced idleness have not equipped them. This is the case with the Captain of the *Medusa* whose vainglorious reliance on Richefort leads to their wreck. These political undercurrents affect all their lives. Géricault's very existence is founded on his father's astute ability to take advantage of whatever power is in the ascendance at a given time. ‘In the early years of the Empire, George-Nicholas had the ability to turn the Revolution to personal profit.' (p 20) Théo, who is warned by Horace against taking in spies (p 81), marvels at his ability to become a favourite at court after formerly painting Napoleon, and at the compromises artists make to attract patrons. He is stunned by the enormous range of portraits of monarchy in the exhibition: ‘Strange that these glorifications of the Bourbon restoration were conceived in studios which not so long before had sublimated the victories of Merngo Austerlitz and Eylau.' (p 311)

The integrity of art is a central theme, and in this ‘portrait of the artist as a young man' we are treated to an exposition of the stages in his development which illustrate the dedication necessary to achieve greatness. In his rumination on the success of *Charging Chasseur* (p 12) he describes the techniques of an artist's composition, in which he carefully combines details in a canvas to achieve an overall effect. We later read of the lessons he valued in his apprenticeship to Carle Vernet, Horace's father (pp 29-30). When he begins to sketch the frigate *Medusa* (pp 37-8) we are treated to how an artist poses and answers problems to research a work before he paints it. He envisages his tormented affair as a painting in which symbolic details denote layers of hidden meaning (p 47). When he encounters Savigny he is distracted by the man's looks: ‘Even without his tale, what a fine head this man would provide, noble and equine. He admired the graceful lines of the pose silhouetted by the window.' (p 55) When he is about to begin his painting he visits Chevreul's factory and describes the colours available with a barely containable (pp 134-138) fastidious delight. When Savigny challenges the themes he intends to incorporate in the work, he responds in exasperation: ‘Good God!...It's not the themes I'm finding a problem but the compositional effect.' (p 164) His description of the sea (p 209)

demonstrates how an artist uses his observation to prepare a painting and its hues, and later his former tutor's admiration of his use of bitumen (p 285-6) makes his skills clear. Even when Vernet questions his flouting of conventions (p 288-9) Théo stands firm: ‘Unlike you, I've nothing to lose.' (p 289) His final mastery of the problems attached to the work is laid bare (pp 292-5) in a poetic tribute to the genius of his creation.

Art can be technically adept and yet lack the passion to make it truly great. Géricault's art is compared to that of his friend and neighbour Horace Vernet whose fame hinges on his ability to create a work of immediate appeal to his patrons and whose life is spent in a cacophony of raucous social mayhem. The description of Horace's studio (pp 26-35) and the hangers-on who are invariably draped around it as potential models is hilarious in its exaggerated bohemianism. In contrast Théo is almost ascetic in his studio which boasts only the bare essentials necessary to whatever inspiration is currently preoccupying him. Horace is an opportunist; one minute painting portraits lauding the Empire the next taking commissions from the Comte d'Artois. ‘Horace knew history, he thought. But history as nothing more than a series of political statements imagined in paintings and tableaux vivants.'(p 28) Horace is horrified to find the cadavers in Théo's studio despite the fact that he ‘had choreographed thousands of corpses for Napoleon's battlefields' (p 240) and studied the human form by visiting prisons too. Théo calmly makes a still life from the bodies (p 233) and later renounces society to become a reclusive artist (p 211). But time judges art, and ironically Horace's assistant who models for Théo, the ‘luminously beautiful'(p 27) boy Delacroix, is to achieve fame which will exceed both men's. It is he who recognizes the greatness of Théo's painting: ‘At last someone who understood. If he applied himself he would do well' (p 291). Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863) would in fact become the greatest French Romantic painter whose relatively lengthy life allowed him to consolidate a far larger body of work than Géricault.

The artist is a storyteller just as a writer is. Théo is seeking the ‘real' story behind the raft of the *Medusa*, a search which has its attendant moral challenges and ambiguities. For art, no matter how sincere in its intention, can also take advantage of its subjects, or get their story ‘wrong', and this novel is about that and other ethical dilemmas. ‘What was he doing, he thought, aimlessly wandering the streets in search of a story?'(p 40) Géricault is uncomfortably aware that his beneficence is founded on self-interest. ‘ *Roll up, roll up, come and see it. Survivors of the* Medusa *frigate. No more than one shilling a head* .' (p 119) He has invited these men into his home but it becomes clear that the story they want told is not the one he wants to tell. Savigny suggests that the portrait should paint them as heroes, to bring shame on ‘the court and King (p 61) who have denied their criticisms of the Ministry, and confesses to being ‘attracted to the dramatic tension in our heroic defence against murderous villains.' (p 164) But Théo is frustrated because he senses other meanings behind the tale. He is warned by the carpenter Lavillette that he should leave well enough alone (p 132) for history is made up of many interpretations, and who is to say which is correct? He's ashamed that he is voyeuristically demanding their memories, knowing that he himself would not have survived as they had. (p 195) He begins to see the links between their story and his own. ‘with a pang, he realised they were all burdened with their own eyewitness accounts, burning to tell the truth yet shamed by the outcome. Heroes or villains, survivors or victims—in which category, he asked himself, did he belong?' (p 217) He compares his relationship with the men's stories, aware that he too has been guilty of sin. ‘If anything, he was becoming a master of lies.' (p 42) For his affair with Alexandrine has wasted years of their lives, ruined hers, and shamed his uncle. Her decision to name their child: ‘Hippolyte, an avenging angel bringing destruction and scandal' (p 219) is poetic justice indeed. Painfully he's aware that he could paint her as the seductress or a victim, and Savigny or Napoleon or the King as either a villain or a hero. ‘Perhaps he had somehow been selected to stand witness to the living and the dead.' (p 268)

‘From that first night all I has to do was survive.' (p 250) The theme of man's innate savagery in the face of death is suggested by Géricault's comparison of Savigny with a panther (p 61) and cannibalism is a key theme. The plot has similarities to classic works of survival such as *Coral Island* or *The Lord of the Flies* in which men quickly become savages when cut loose from society's restrictions and confronted by starvation. ‘As each day passes, the links loosen to the person you once were…All you know is a burning corrosive desire to survive.' (p 188) The battle waged (pp 179-180) in their delirium on the

fourth night is horrifying in its brutality **.** Savigny and Corréard have no qualms about confessing to their part in several horrendous murders, but when quizzed about devouring their dead comrades they are immediately offended, since this is considered by society as one of the basest of acts. Visions of food in all its glory (p 181) are dreadfully juxtaposed against the first act of cannibalism (p 182). Théo knows he is treading on dangerous waters here, and that in depicting such inflammatory material, he would need to recognize that 'it was a matter of tone' (p 190). But he later discovers an even more horrendous story when he interviews Thomas the Helmsman (pp 248-266) whom Grassin the informer locates, thereby providing the last key to the puzzle. It was clear that too many men on the raft meant death to all, so that some of them had to go. The idea of the 'survival of the fittest' is graphically played out here, asking whether 'The custom of the sea' (p 258) is all that different from any other survival story where men routinely make decisions which lead to the death of their comrades.

'Somehow he must reel his guests out of the light and cast them back into the deep, blue sea.' (p 131) The idea that rebellion can be snuffed out by too comfortable a life is explored in the transformation of the guests from desperately ill reactionaries to men relishing their food and leisure. Savigny 'reminded Géricault of some dowager aunt, not the renowned doctor and survivor, … who had pledged his soul to set the record straight…Instead this gardener smiled happily and whistled some tuneless melody as he worked. White butterflies darted among the buddleia.' (p 130) He regrets feeding and coddling them, 'He needed them desperate, weakened, pouring out their story in a torrent of rage.' (p 189) Théo, himself, abandons his comfortable life for the pursuit of his art in a single-minded fashion. 'What I want is the trial of misfortune.' (p 320)

'If there is anything certain on earth, he thought, it's our pain. Only suffering is real. As for the spectacle, it's mere vignette.' (p 208) The subject of Théo's painting is eventually decided, when he paints neither the abandonment of the men on the raft, or their rescue, but the sighting of the *Argus* : 'You did not want to die like the others. At whatever cost, you were determined to survive.' (p 236) This moment, which was in reality yet another disappointment, symbolized for the artist the universal capacity for the human spirit to rise in hope, to expect salvation and redemption even in the darkest of hours. It is a magnificent gesture to the refusal of the heart to give up hope, even in the face of futility. 'Without one soul brought to justice, … there could be no consolation, not one moment of solace… Inconsolable… Can there ever be a more desolate word?' (p 263) It is the artist's role to remind us of this immense loneliness that we each share in the 'great roaring emptiness' (p 195) which we must learn to bare. Despite the disappointing reviews of his masterpiece, he has one heartening moment when the King willingly 'enters' his painting despite the pain he sees there, and Théo realises that he has seen what he intended to show his audience. (pp 314-5) The King's understanding of what he has tried to portray about human suffering, is a sign that his work and his name will endure.

WRITING STYLE

1. Contemporary writers often employ a style described as **'faction'** in fashioning a story based on an historical event or figure; by elaborating on it and creating 'internal' lives for their characters which can only be guessed at or imagined given the minimal details available about many past lives. This novel draws on the life of artist Théodore Géricault (1791-1824), whose details are briefly explained at Wikipedia Available: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Th%C3%A9odore_G%C3%A9ricault [Accessed 11 October 2005]. His painting 'The Raft of the *Medusa*', detail from which is included in the cover image, can be viewed at the Artchive available at: http://www.artchive.com/artchive/G/gericault/raft_of_the_medusa.jpg.html [Accessed 12 October 2005]. Examine the painting in conjunction with Théo's description of what he was attempting (pp 292-5). In some ways the artwork is a piece of 'faction' too. The research an author (or an artist like Géricault) needs to do to create such a work is summarized in the file that Grassin gives Géricault (pp 49-50) as part of his service in locating his chief 'eye-witnesses' whose testimonies inform Théo's work. Some things about the painting are accurate, but others are altered eg there are more than fifteen figures. Read Rupert Christiansen's *The Victorian Visitors: Culture Shock in Nineteenth Century Britain Chapter One Théodore Géricault, painter* Available http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/c/christiansen-01victorian.html [Accessed 14 October 2005] Compare this work to other works of faction such as Delia Falconer's *The Lost Thoughts of Soldiers* or Carrie Tiffany's *Everyman's Rules for Scientific Rules for Living.*

2. **The narration of the novel is largely in third person but consists of two alternate narratives,** one detailing Géricault's internal life, and the other including a series of stories concerning the wreck. The latter have a similarity to the serial novels which would become popular in Europe at this time, and to the 'tall tales' told by sailors after their voyages. eg Savigny's description of how they survived (pp 184-7) by eating flying fish, and drinking urine is almost farcical. The narration slips into first person only when Thomas tells the 'real' story. The author plays with the notion of metafiction in the stories told to Théo, too. When Grassin sells him Thomas, a 'more reliable narrator' (p 246) the phrase is a sly reference to the literary notion that narrators of novels can be 'unreliable'. How does narrative voice and perspective operate in this novel?

3. **Four settings are described and each carry a symbolic resonance.**The **sea** is described in lyrical, elemental terms. 'A lassitude seemed to be descending on them all. There was something dreamlike about this floating world, the tireless splice of the bows through the foaming swell.' (p 99) Théo during his wild ride, stops at the sea, and wishes he lived 'at the fierce extremities of this salt-sprayed rim of earth…, away from his uncle and the prying eyes of Montmartre.' (p 208) **Montmartre** on the outskirts of Paris is presented as a world protected by indulgence, an idyllic, unreal world in which Horace and the visitors escape reality. **Paris** is described variously: 'Always he enjoyed the sight of Paris spread out below like a promise' (p 39) but Géricault observes its poverty and filth and thinks that 'In this chaos it was hard to envisage Napoleon's plans for a Paris of long vistas, marble pillars soaring against the skyline, Corinthian monuments to military might - the Art du Carousel, the Place de la Concorde bombastic in ornamentation and style, where the laurel counted for more than any other plant.'(p 40) **London** has 'a grandiose ugliness' (p 324), and Théo endures 'stultifying evenings of affectation and snobbery' in this 'dull drab land' (p 325) Discuss the use of setting in this novel.

4. The use of language includes **nautical similes and metaphors:** 'the tale itself that was reeling him in fast like a hooked fish gasping for breath.' (p 147) 'The idea weighted like stone ballast in their minds' (p 182). 'Instead he surrendered himself to the rolling heave of such mountainous flesh, fierce and elemental as the ocean itself.' (p 206) When Théo's father renounces him: 'There the cords were cut and sinking beneath the swell.' (p 280) Discuss this sort of imagery.

5. **Humour** is subtly present in nearly every encounter, and the 'Restoration' comedy of manners is a clear influence in scenes such as the visit to Géricault by his lover and her cuckolded husband during which the conversation is punctuated with sly innuendo and

culminates in a clandestine coupling in the corridor (pp 3-11). The bawdy tales he recounts for his uncle's pleasure are exaggerated to the extent that he thinks in despair ‘How much longer must he go on? Who, else, could I have fucked in Rome? (p 9) Géricault is so frustrated with Savigny's unlikely tales of survival that he exclaims: I will not create a tableau in which you munch on your buckles and belts.' (p 185) There is tragic-comedy in his need to instruct Savigny how to ‘act' in playing his part in the final tableau; to mime the actions of a man signaling that a ship is at hand. (pp 292-3) Horace is also a source of ‘light relief'; his asides are ironically astute and obtuse and his antics with his followers are highly entertaining. After his first sighting of Savigny being looked after by La Motte he describes the scene as ‘Rather Rembrandt” and then concludes in a masterful understatement: ‘Well whoever they are, they don't look very well.' (p 60) Discuss any passages which were particularly amusing.

THE AUTHOR

Arabella Edge read English Literature at Bristol University in the UK and came to Australia in 1992. With her husband Nick Gaze, she divides her time between Sydney and Bicheno, on Tasmania's east coast. Her first novel, *The Company* , won the Best First book in the 2001 Commonwealth Writers' Prize in the South East Asia & South Pacific region, and was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The *Author's Note* explains the origin of the novel's title, referring to fame and celebrity, suggesting that often artists are praised and then flayed alive for their fame. Géricault has desired it, but it largely eludes him in his lifetime, during which he is surrounded by figures like Horace who fete fame and relish its attentions. 'Ingres greeted colleagues and acquaintances…, adopting the nonchalant stance of the famous who feigned not to notice they were on show…To Géricault, it seemed that beneath the shining carapace of that fame, Ingres appeared smaller and frailer, more mortal than you could imagine.' (p 303) The hanging of Théo's painting too high reminds him of his own pretension as an 'amateur dilettante' (p 306) and his ambivalence when the work is finally displayed is a puzzle to him, 'Surely this moment was the pinnacle. From an early age, this was what he had always desired.' (p 315) His painting's uneven reviews are compounded by the ultimate irony when the tawdry Marine Panorama of the Shipwreck shows in Dublin in a theatre opposite his painting exhibit. Is fame an illusion? Does anyone ever achieve the greatness they desire? Discuss.

2. The two 'survivors' here become celebrities too. Discuss modern manifestations of such notoriety. eg Television shows such as Survivor, Big Brother or Idol?

3. Literary and artistic references inform the action. For example, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (p 190); 'Then fasting had more power than grief.' Dante's *Divine Comedy* (p 225); Byron's poem (p 226). Art references also include Guernin's 'Marcus Sextus'; Gros's 'Plague Hospital' at Jaffa (p 227). Read or view any of these references and compare them to the book.

4. What other titles might this novel have had? 'The Raft of the *Medusa* ' is one possibility. 'Inconsolable' is another. 'Scene of a Shipwreck' was a proposed title for the painting (p 307). Suggest and discuss others.

5. 'Whoever survives by violence is a traitor,' he murmured, 'And there's no prettifying that.' (p 264) Discuss.

6. 'I have witnessed peace…. Survival.' (p 265) Thomas poignantly describes the dilemma of soldiers everywhere. Discuss.

7. Savigny is 'a man in perpetual flight from himself,…He had saved himself, and from the moment he had stepped onto the parapet, a life sentence had been passed.' (p 267) 'Thomas at least could surrender to an inconsolable life.' (p 267) Is Savigny a pitiable or a despicable figure?

8. Survival guilt is also a theme in *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. Compare and discuss.

9. This novel traces the intersections between the personal and the communal concerns of man. Théo's downfall (p 336) is a metaphor for the wreck of a ship, or a nation. Discuss.

10. Alexandrine lived in a time which gave women few opportunities. Théo recognizes her subdued recklessness (p 15) on their first meeting, and her determined pursuit of their affair is an example of her strength. But she is a victim of a society in which her father has arranged her marriage to an old man, leaving her few options except to take a lover. When tragedy strikes she is steely, rejecting Theo's pathetic offer (p 199) and opting to join a nunnery: 'I've made my choice and found freedom at last' (p 200). He realizes that he and his uncle 'were both guilty, both stood accused of not giving Alexandrine what she most desired: freedom from one and devotion from the other. Deceit adultery, incest what did it matter in the end when of the three of them, Alexandrine was the most betrayed.' (p 279) Théo admires her courage 'Alexandrine would have survived on the raft' (p 201). Is she a survivor or a casualty? Discuss.

11. The Timeline in the novel covers June/ August/ September 1818/ August 1819/ January 1824 and traverses significant changes in Théo's life. Read about the historical events underpinning the historical action and discuss in conjunction with the novel.

12. Class and aristocratic pretension are despised by Savigny in the actions of the Captain and the Governor's family on board the *Medusa* . Eg The daughter's haughty demeanour (p 65) and her naïve comparison of the ship's collision to the losing of a carriage wheel in the Bois de Boulogne. (p 107) Wealthy people such as Géricault have their attendants eg 'Fierce, devoted La Motte' (p 35) to ease life's path; Alexandrine's maid, Louisette is treated with undisguised contempt, and even the sole woman aboard the *Medusa* is patronized in Théo's imagination: 'My, she was a brave, gap-toothed crone with ruddy apple cheeks and a ready smile. He imagined her generous and kind hearted as La Motte, he could just see her wheeling a trolley across blackened battlefields, delivering soup.' (p 151) Is this novel critical of class? Is Théo as guilty of pretension as those he despises?

13. Théo says to Thomas: 'Tell me about the mercy killings' (p 261). Is he being ironic? Or was it better for those men to die quickly than by slow degrees?

14. 'The Mercy Killings…This scene required an opinion, a stance, a particular side. He was an artist, not a judge or a journalist penning some outraged editorial…' (p 218) Is the artist's role to be impartial? To be ambivalent?

15. 'I could tell my story a hundred times over without stopping for breath, yet neither you, nor I, nor anyone for that matter, will ever understand what I have seen and done.' (p 132) Discuss.

16. 'Suffering and survival. In all this splendour, it occurred to him that only he seemed to have given expression to the themes of their times.' (p 312) Is Théo's painting a metaphor for the times in which he lived? Discuss.

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