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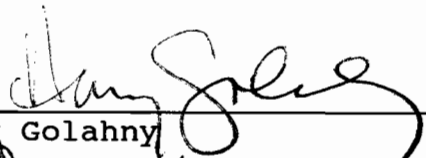
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Delacroix's Obsession with the Byronic Hero

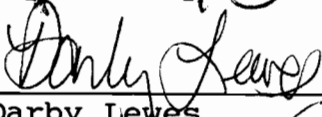
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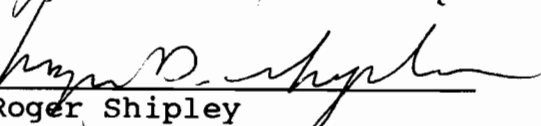
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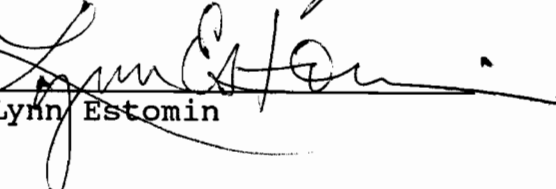
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Delacroix's Obsession with the Byronic Hero

The 19th century was an era which was characterized by change and revolution. It was an age of industry and intellect, a time for new ideas and innovations. Brilliant scientists, architects, artists, authors and poets were beginning to stand up for their new outlooks and beliefs and to produce works that relied on their own imaginations rather than on classical ideals. Originality and individualism were rapidly becoming more important than the canons of reason, logic and order, established by the older masters; the great minds of the 19th century wanted to break with tradition, to throw away the rules, to discover progressive and modern ideas. The world experienced the Industrial Revolution, the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and most importantly, the revolution of thought. Due to wars for religious, political and social freedom a new mind- set developed; people from all classes were

demanding individual equality. Great poets and artists were fighting against the accepted codes and postulates enforced by the academies. Nineteenth century artists and poets were fighting for the right to express themselves in their own unique way. Poets such as Shelley, Keats, and Byron, and artists such as David, Gericault, and Delacroix were considered rebels by their contemporaries, and were to become the greatest poets and artists of their time. They were part of a time period that would be known as the Romantic Era and were united in their effort to break and revitalize what they thought were boring and out-dated traditions.

Romanticism was a fresh and invigorating movement; Baudelaire described it as an alternate way of feeling (Athanasoglou - Kallmyer 18-21). The Romantic era provided the opportunity for creative minds to produce magnificent works; artists, poets, musicians and scientists would work together to build the foundation for a world in which anything would become possible. New styles would be developed and ideas that were at one time considered radical would become fashionable and popular.

Romanticism united literature, philosophy, science, rhetoric, high and popular art, tragedy and comedy, prose, poetry and epic, beauty and ugliness, the past and modernity (Athanasoglou- Kallmyer 18- 21).

"Romanticism was an attitude of the mind that was not inclined to recognize limits" (Prideaux 13). The great minds of the Romantic time period would break the canons established by the old masters; the new generation of artists and poets would replace the old fashioned traditions with vigorous and refreshing ideas.

Two men who exemplified the rebellious spirit of the 19th century were the poet, Lord George Gordon Byron, and the artist, Eugene Delacroix. Byron, born in 1788, lived an extraordinary life filled with adventure and scandal; he was an excellent poet and achieved a notorious reputation, not only through his poetry, but also through the events of his life. The French critic Hippolyte Taine in his *History for English Literature*, written in the 1850's, said that Byron was " the greatest and most English of these artists; he is so great and so English that from him alone we shall learn more truths of his country and of his age than from all the rest together." (The Norton Anthology of English Literature 479) Also said of Byron: " Byron had achieved an immense European reputation during his own lifetime, while his English contemporaries were admired only by coteries in England and America; through much of the nineteenth century he continued to be rated as one of the greatest of English poets and the very prototype of literary Romanticism. His influence was felt everywhere,

not only among minor writers-- in the two or three decades after his death, most European poets struck Byronic attitudes== but among the major poets and novelists (including Goethe in Germany, Balzac and Stendhal in France, Pushkin and Dostoevsky in Russia, and Melville in America), painters (especially Delacroix), and composers (especially Beethoven and Berlioz)." (The Norton Anthology of English Literature 479)

Byron was considered the father or leader of Romanticism (Spector 76), especially in the eyes of the French.

Delacroix was as renowned as a painter as Byron was as a poet. Delacroix was known for his innovative painting style and his poetic appeal. Baudelaire said that Delacroix's "works give the most food for thought and recalls to mind the greatest sum of poetic feelings; Delacroix gained the sympathy of all poets" (Baudelaire 362). Baudelaire also said of the artist, "he is surely the archetype of the painter-poet", and "Eugene Delacroix was a strange mixture of skepticism, courtesy, dandyism, fiery will, guile, despotism, and, withal, of a species of particular kindness and restrained tenderness that always accompanies genius" (Baudelaire 367, 374). Delacroix, born ten years after Byron, was only one of the many artists and writers who were deeply influenced by the notorious poet. Byron had a powerful influence on the life and art of

Delacroix, not only in the 1820's, when Delacroix was avidly reading the works of Byron, but also throughout the remainder of the painter's career. Delacroix became obsessed not only with the Byron's poetry, but also with Byron's life; Delacroix's fixation on Byron is readily apparent in his early works and can also be detected in his later pieces, paintings which until this study were not directly attributed to Byron's influence.

Byron was considered a leader of Romanticism in poetry and Delacroix was the father of Romantic painting, but both men denied the insistence of the public that they were doing anything different or revolutionary in their work. Byron and Delacroix were 'different', their styles were new and vibrant; their methods challenged the classical principles of realism and reason. Imagination was one of the key elements in Romantic thought and neither man could be found lacking. Byron's active imagination allowed him to create numerous plays and poems; Delacroix brought Byron's works to life in vivid color. Delacroix thought that the task of the artist was to 'draw from his imagination the means of rendering nature and its effect, and to render them according to his own temperament' (Holt 150- 170).

Both Byron and Delacroix would have been superb prototypes for the manifestation of the Romantic spirit had they been born at the inception

of Romanticism: they both exemplified the qualities of rebelliousness, independence, intelligence, and of originality. Byron rejected the customs and rules of society; he cared little for public opinion. Due to the criticism and ridicule he endured from his class-mates, because of a lame foot, he came to hate human nature, especially man's injustice to man. He became an over-achiever to compensate for his disability and to prove to his friends that even though he was the butt of their jokes, he was superior to them in many things, most importantly in intelligence and imagination. The distaste for injustice which he developed as a child would stay with him throughout his life and play a major role in his poetry-- in the creation of a figure who was above the insults and crude remarks of the ordinary man. Byron led a strange life; he could be at one moment charming and debonair and in the next violent and angry. Byron said of himself to his friend, Lady Blessington: " I am so changeable, being everything by turns and nothing long-- I am such a strange melange of good and evil, that it would be difficult to describe me" (The Norton Anthology of English Literature 483). Byron was ostracized by society and eventually led a life of travel especially in the East (Greece). Byron refused to submit to the code of his aristocratic class or to that of any other. He was a model for young Frenchmen, like Delacroix, who were

constrained by the narrow-minded society of the Bourbon Restoration. Though he had the title of 'Lord', he was not a gentleman in the eyes of society, but he was a legend in the realm of poetry. People loved his verses and almost overnight he became a success in the literary world. Byron, after writing *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was known to have said that he awoke to find himself famous.

Delacroix was just as rebellious and notorious as was Byron.

Delacroix was considered by critics 'a Revolutionary, or even a maniac bent on destroying the most sacred traditions' (Huyghe 58). Delacroix was, like Byron, unconventional, but whereas Byron shocked the conservatives in his personal life; Delacroix startled the authorities with his art. Delacroix was rejected from membership to the Academie des Beaux-Arts eight times, but still refused to modify the principles of his art. Delacroix, like Byron, was completely a-social, detached and self-absorbed. Each one thought of himself as larger than life-- as superhuman. Delacroix stated, "Ah, how I would like to come back in a hundred years, to find out what they think of me" (Huyghe 163).

Delacroix was arrogant to the point that he dictated where his tomb would be, "My tomb will be in the cemetery of Pere-Lachaise, on the height, in a position somewhat apart" (Huyghe 164).

the misfortunes of their heroes with their own tribulations as persecuted geniuses.

Byron's magnetic effect upon Delacroix was due, in part, to the Byronic hero. Byron created a figure who was majestic, extremely intelligent, morose, misunderstood, and isolated from society; a figure who came to be known as the Byronic hero. Byron's hero was different from past heroes; he was a champion for the injustices of man imposed upon fellow man, not a defender of the safety of the aristocratic maiden. He was not envied or sought after by multitudes of women; nor was he charming, dashing and gorgeous-- he was not the 'knight in shining armor'. Byron's hero was arrogant and self-absorbed; he considered himself superior to the normal man; his intelligence could only be understood by the equivalent of a god. His hero was not happy and excited about life and his accomplishments, but was deeply troubled by some unknown and grave sin in his past. In the years of the revolutionary spirit, the educated public recognized and sympathized with this new and different hero, many tried to become this hero, as did Byron and Delacroix. This age of man needed a champion of injustice and inequality, not a handsome and dashing prince who would save the prettiest maid and uphold the standards of the aristocracy. People wanted a hero who was powerful, not necessarily in

the strength of the body, but one who was invincible in mind and spirit; a man who would die for a cause that was important not only to himself but to his followers. A man who could put an end to the inequality that the middle class Frenchman was suffering at the hands of the aristocracy.

After Byron's death, the public began to immortalize him. Byron was a rebel; he was banished by his own society and was considered a warrior and a champion by the Greeks, the people to whom he had devoted his later life. The French middle classes were striving for freedom and were advocates for the Greeks; working class Frenchmen wanted the Greeks to have independence. Because Byron championed the cause of the Greek people, he was made a hero by middle class French citizens. Byron was remembered for his mind and his poetry and perhaps most importantly, for his rebellious spirit.

Delacroix was one of those young Frenchmen who was interested in the Greek cause and in Byron. Most scholars agree that Delacroix read the works of Byron in the early 1820's. Proof that Delacroix was reading the works of Byron can be seen in the many paintings executed by Delacroix in the same decade that have similar titles or parallel subject matter, and in the many excerpts from Delacroix's journal which contain direct quotes from Byron's poetry. In 1844, Gautier wrote, "Delacroix is dependant on

Byron. He has the same love of Greece and the Orient, the same instinct for travel, the same passion for horses, lions and tigers" (Wilson= Smith 80). Baudelaire said that 'Delacroix was especially interested in the identity of thought and action in Byron's life and poetry; he wanted to be Byron. Delacroix and Byron were similar in thought and attitude.' (Baudelaire 61) Charles Blanc called Delacroix "the Byron of painting" (Wilson- Smith 80). Delacroix was interested in Byron more than for a source of inspiration; the artist wanted to become what he thought was Byron; he wanted to become the Byronic hero. Delacroix was imaginative, intelligent and creative. He had a deep passion for literature and a love of books which is made apparent by the subjects in his art.

Delacroix was an extremely intelligent man; he was well read and well educated. He knew early in his career that he would have to paint in the manners and ideals established by a group of older masters in the art world who reinforced the rules and codes for all 'good' art. Delacroix didn't agree with the older painters' principles but he realized that to gain an audience and a favorable reputation he must abide by these given rules. He also knew that by painting scenes from Byron's poetry, and scenes associated with Byron's life, that he would attract public attention. In his early career Delacroix was able to paint pictures that interested him,

scenes from Byron's poems, and gain a favorable reputation from the paintings. Delacroix utilized public interest in Byron to his advantage, reaping the benefits of the Byron craze, while at the same time incorporating Byron's themes deeper into his mind and art. Even in his early career, his work contained hints of innovation; he moved into his own style slowly so as to allow the public to grow accustomed to it. Delacroix wanted fame and immortality in much the same way that Byron did; they lived and worked to make their names familiar to the public for eternity. Delacroix knew that his success depended upon his talent and his ability to interest the fickle public.

Eventually, Delacroix painted scenes that had meaning for him, with no concern as to how the public would receive the works. He, like Byron, was the recipient of much criticism, but also like Byron, he shrugged it off as the misunderstanding of his genius by the ordinary man. Byron had become famous in part because of his disregard for public opinion; Delacroix was about to achieve a fame that was similar in origin to that of the great poet. Within a decade, Delacroix was to experience staggering success, and then move beyond success and become a rebel. When Delacroix finally achieved the grand reputation that he had dreamed of, he began painting scenes that interested him rather than allowing

public taste to guide his hand. He then found himself above the realms of public understanding, and much like the Byronic hero, he was alone and misunderstood. Delacroix was aware of his reputation and said: "I am isolated now among these old friends! There are any amount of things they simply cannot forgive me-- first and foremost the advantages fortune gives me over them." (Huyghe 234). Delacroix was aloof and solitary; he was more important, in his mind, than his contemporaries. Delacroix, like Byron before him, was a rebel and an outcast, but whereas Byron was notorious in his personal life, Delacroix was a rebel in his professional life.

Delacroix achieved his initial fame as a result of paintings such as "The Natchez" (1824), "Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi" (1826), "The Death of Sardanapalus" (1827), and "Liberty Leading the People" (1830). All of these works have a clear relation to the work or to the life of Byron; all can be traced to a specific poem, play, or simply to Byronic thought.

The story of "The Natchez" was taken from Chateaubriand's epic of 1801 entitled Atala. Even though the story does not stem from Byron's poetry, the ideas are unmistakably Byronic in nature. The painting shows a Native American man and woman on the shore of the great Mississippi

river. The couple are the only survivors of their clan, a group of Indians who were massacred by the 'white man'. Similar to the Byronic hero, the Indian family is alone and isolated from the rest of humanity; their customs and lifestyle are misunderstood and misinterpreted by the white society. They had escaped slaughter and were now fleeing their home to seek protection for their unborn child. Along the way the woman begins her labor and the couple is forced to the shore so she can give birth. The painting depicts the moment after birth when the father looks proudly at the son cradled in his arms. The Indian family is alone in the world, they are without friends and relatives and are in danger due to the white settlers who have invaded their home. The Indians are misunderstood by the white society and for that reason are believed to be bad people. The Byronic hero was also misunderstood by his contemporaries and was ostracized for his 'strange' and unique qualities. The theme of the painting mirrors Byronic thought; the isolation, misunderstanding, and the tragedy of the situation all reflect characteristics of the Byronic hero. Byron was also interested, as were the French, in exotic people; the Indian provided a subject that the public would find interesting. Delacroix was playing upon the public demands to establish himself as an artist with talent. The French people had never seen the Indians of America and they

were curious; Delacroix presented an opportunity to see the Native American people. The middle class French citizens had a deep sympathy for any oppressed people due to the fact that the working classes were fighting for their own rights. Delacroix knew of the laborers' plight and played upon it in this work. The colors are used to generate feeling and sympathy; the deep red of the man's clothing to symbolize the bloodshed of his people, the black of the woman's clothing to symbolize the death of her family and the white of the baby's blanket to show the innocence of a new born child. It is not likely that these Indians dressed in this fashion, but as the French people were not aware of the proper dress of an Indian, Delacroix was free to paint the clothing to suit his purposes. "The Natchez" successfully shows the relation between the forces of Byron's poetry, Delacroix's painting, and the working class Frenchman's frame of mind.

In 1824 the French people were devastated with the news that Byron had died in Missolonghi. With Byron's death, the laboring middle classes had lost their champion for their fight for freedom and they were heartbroken. Byron had committed himself to the war in Greece; he even dedicated poetry to the cause as can be seen in the poem:

When a Man Hath no Freedom to Fight for at Home.

When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,
Let him combat for that of his neighbors;
Let him think of the glories of Greece and of Rome,
And get knock'd on the head for his labours.

To do good to mankind is the chivalrous plan,
And is always as nobly requited;
Then battle for freedom wherever you can,
And, if not shot or hang'd, you'll get knighted.

(The Norton Anthology of English Literature 489)

Byron's great theme was that of intellectual and moral freedom; he was concerned with social iniquity. Byron was an advocate for human rights and fought for the freedom of oppressed people; he was estranged from his home land so he chose another country to fight for and in doing so he found immortality. With Byron's death, the world lost a poet and a freedom fighter. Delacroix was grieved by this loss and as a result painted, "Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi" (1826). This painting was completed just two years after Byron's death and is considered a tribute to the great poet. The painting portrays the symbolic figure of a nation standing on top of the crumbled ruins of an unknown building. The work is an allegory of defeated Greece pleading for help from Europe. Delacroix painted a political scene to force a response, not only from the public, from which he knew he would receive waves of

praise, but also from the government, in the form of aid to Greece. Though Delacroix's painting may not have been the stimulus which guided France into war, the country did eventually come to Greece's rescue.

The monumental figure of Greece has her arms outstretched pleading for help for her people; she is wearing an expression of helplessness which was meant to stir sympathy in the hearts of her viewers. The woman is showing her audience the destruction of war, and is begging for help. Delacroix paints the limp arm of a dead soldier emerging from the rubble, blood stains upon the rocks and bleak skies to represent defeat and despair. There is a Turk in the background with a raised staff to symbolize victory and to give a warning that the battle is not over until the Turks have achieved total destruction of the Greeks. Delacroix ingeniously painted the colors of the French flag into the painting; the figure of Greece is wearing a white dress, a blue coat and red shoes, and the dead man's arm is clothed in red and blue. By incorporating the French colors into the painting, Delacroix is arousing the patriotism of the French viewer and pushing for France's involvement in the war. The painting is not only a tribute to Byron, but was also a weapon designed to help Byron's cause. Byron may have died without seeing the victory of the Greeks, but Delacroix was continuing the fight in his stead. As in Byron's poem, When

a Man Hath no Freedom to Fight For at Home. Delacroix was fighting for the freedom of his neighbors; but at the same time he was continuing the fight for equality in his own country.

In 1827, Delacroix painted what is today considered to be one of his most famous works, "The Death of Sardanapalus". The painting is taken from a play of the same title written by Byron. The play was a description of the luxurious life of the Assyrian king, Sardanapalus, whose enemies were about to destroy him. The king, not wanting to be defeated, closed himself, all of his treasures, including his concubines, in a room and set fire to it. Byron presents the king as a man capable of moments of philosophic depth and devil may care heroism; he made a hero out of him. In actuality, Sardanapalus was a user of women; he was a rich glutton who cared for nothing but his own pleasure; his downfall was seen by his followers as his destiny. Byron's Sardanapalus was a "transformation of the monarch into a bourgeois dandy, a fashionable and elegant gentleman contemptuous of morality and lightly self-indulgent" (Spector 42); a character modeled after Byron himself. Delacroix painted a slightly altered version of Sardanapalus' death; he painted a frightful massacre, violent, vivid and grotesque. The scene is one of murder and suicide; the king commands his concubines to be stabbed with a knife so that they do

not suffer the tortures of the fire which is already consuming the far end of the room. The king is surrounded by commotion and violence, but remains calm, aloof and arrogant, like the Byronic hero. The monarch reclines on his massive bed, oblivious to his surroundings, completely isolated. Delacroix completed many sketches and preparatory drawings and paintings for this work and in the final version Sardanapalus takes on the look of complete aloofness; the look of the Byronic hero. Both Byron and Delacroix show Sardanapalus as meditative rather than fearful; both portray him as the Byronic hero.

Delacroix's painting of Sardanapalus met with hostile reactions and was generally disliked. The authorities were not amused. Delacroix was privately reprimanded by the superintendant of the Beaux- Arts and told that unless he changed his ways, he would not sell the picture and would get no commissions (Wilson- Smith 82-83). After the critics' harsh reception, Delacroix said, " I have a rare genius that does not let me live peacefully like a clerk.... The love of glory is a deceptive passion.... that always leads right to the abyss of sadness and of vanity... " (Spector 88). Delacroix felt alone and misunderstood; Delacroix's audience could not understand his violent portrayal of Sardanapalus. He felt that the painting was a work of genius, that the public would love it. The public thought

that Delacroix had lost his mind and his talent; Delacroix had moved too quickly into his own style and was now faced with repairing his reputation before he could move on to his own innovative painting style.

The damage was repaired in 1830, with Delacroix's masterpiece, "Liberty Leading the People". The painting shows a female allegorical figure who represents freedom. The woman, like the Byronic hero, rises above the death and destruction of war to lead her country to freedom. This hero, like Byron himself, is concerned with social injustice and inequality. She carries the French flag, and a rifle; she accompanies her countrymen into the fight for liberty. Delacroix unites the Bourgeois, the soldier and the working class in the battle against the Bourbon monarchy. The colors of the French flag are mirrored throughout the painting, symbolizing the unity of the men in their patriotism. The dead men in the foreground symbolize the cost of freedom, but the figure of Liberty is isolated from the fallen soldiers; motivated by her own moral code, she marches on oblivious to the death and destruction which surround her. The figure of Liberty exhibits many characteristics of the Byronic hero; at the same time, the painting incorporates Byron's goal of equality. The Byronic hero was above the mundane troubles of society, but Lord Byron was not; Delacroix successfully unites Byron's philosophy with the concepts

associated with the Byronic hero. "Liberty Leading the People" is a painting in which the French people take up the battle that Byron had championed in Greece; they follow Byron's lead and fight for freedom.

Delacroix achieved his fame through the use of Byronic themes: ideas that the public could relate to and scenes in which the public would find meaning. Paintings like "Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi" and "Liberty Leading the People", were meant to rally the public, to play upon the working class Frenchman's rebellious spirit and patriotism. In the 1830's, the Byron craze began to fade away and with it went Delacroix's chief source of inspiration; he knew that the public was moving on to other causes and other interests and that he too would have to find other subjects to amuse his fickle audience. Although the French middle classes lost interest in Byron, Delacroix never would, but because of the lack of enthusiasm for Byronic scenes Delacroix was forced to paint pictures that had subjects that his customers wanted in order to sell his works. Yet, though the subjects were different, Delacroix managed to place some concept, idea or theme from Byron's poetry into his work.

Though many of Delacroix's works can be directly related to Byron's influence by the content or title of the work, there are also works that do not have an obvious connection, but that nonetheless reflect some aspect

of Byron's life or poetry. Most of the paintings that have been regarded as having some obvious relation to Byron were completed early in Delacroix's career, when the artist was known to have been reading Byron's poetry. Most scholars believe that the paintings completed in the artist's later life bear little or no evidence of Byron's influence, that Delacroix was not reading the texts and was not considering Byron or his literature. What the historians have not considered, or at least have not considered in depth, is that the poems and information that Delacroix read pertaining to Byron had a deep and lasting effect on Delacroix's work, a power which would influence his art throughout his career. An examination of several paintings will demonstrate that Byron did have a lasting influence over the content and meaning within Delacroix's paintings.

In most of Delacroix's later paintings, the titles give no hint of a Byronic influence, but characteristics which relate to the Byronic hero do permeate the works. Delacroix's painting, "Hamlet and Horatio in the Graveyard" (1839), is a picture that is not ordinarily considered as a work which has an obvious influence from Byron's poetry. The inspiration for Delacroix's painting is found in Shakespeare's Hamlet. Delacroix chooses violent scenes, just after or just before the action takes place; he is not interested in portraying the play scene by scene, but with painting the

emotion and the situation-- portraying each facet of Hamlet's personality (Edenbaum 340- 51). Delacroix paints the scene in which Hamlet and Horatio are in the graveyard; the diggers have uncovered a skull and are now presenting it to Hamlet, but he is not paying attention to his surroundings. Horatio interacts with the diggers while Hamlet remains in his own little world. Hamlet, much like the Byronic hero is isolated by his grief and superior knowledge. Delacroix employed his skill with a paintbrush to further isolate Hamlet in this painting. Delacroix's use of colors serve to place Hamlet in a world of his own-- Hamlet is dressed in black; he is a somber figure at the edge of the group. He is pale in complexion and gloomy in appearance. The three other figures have colorful clothing (red, brown and earth tones), and healthy complexions. Hamlet is different and his distinctness sets him apart from the other figures. Delacroix also utilizes subtle devices such as gesture and atmosphere to set Hamlet apart from the other men. Hamlet's hands and leg point away from the group, suggesting that his mind is also in another place. The digger's are focused on Horatio not on Hamlet, the group appears to be having a discussion about the skull, but Hamlet does not take part. Hamlet looks in the digger's direction but he seems to be looking through him not at him. Even the wind serves to push Hamlet in the

opposite direction; a breeze blows the plume of Hamlet's hat away from the three other men. Delacroix also painted Hamlet's cloak with brushstrokes which slant in the opposite direction of Horatio's. The sky is gloomy and the landscape is sublime, both characteristics which reflect influence from the Byronic hero. The Byronic hero is not associated with sunny skies and softly rolling hills; Byron's hero is morose and dangerous.

It is important to note that other artists paint scenes from Shakespeare's Hamlet, but these artists do not incorporate Byronic themes into their paintings. A painting completed by Henry Fuseli in the late 1700's demonstrates a view different from that of Delacroix's depiction of Hamlet. Fuseli was a devoted painter of Shakespearean themes and this scene, "Hamlet and the Ghost", shows the dynamic action and perfection of line characteristic of Classicism. Fuseli places the characters in an architectural space, depicting the natural order expected of a painting in that time period; by placing figures in an architectural setting, the artist demonstrates the proper scale and provides the viewer with a space that can be easily understood. There are lines in the floor and in the wall to show proper perspective; the Classical artist must prove that he knows the rules of the art world. Fuseli uses clear and distinct lines, as line and clarity are more important than the color and expression which

Delacroix adopts in "Hamlet and Horatio in the Graveyard". Fuseli would never dream of placing the back of a figure in the direct line of vision as Delacroix does in his painting; all must be explicit so that the audience can recognize and understand the subject. Hamlet is clearly in the center of the picture and is interacting with all the characters. There is no one figure isolated from the group, nor is one figure distinct in dress or attitude. There is no evidence of the Byronic hero in Fuseli's work.

In Fuseli's painting Hamlet is a part of the group; he is directly involved in the action taking place. Fuseli's scene shows the importance placed upon action and drama, upon the heroic action of Hamlet, while Delacroix focuses upon Hamlet's thought and inner turmoil. The two paintings show the differences between Classicism and Romanticism, with the Classicists placing importance upon order, reason and dramatic action and the Romanticists casting importance on thought, imagination and originality. Fuseli's Hamlet is heroic in the original meaning of heroism: handsome, strong, and proud-- a man of action. Delacroix's Hamlet is heroic in the Byronic fashion: morose, isolated and misunderstood-- a man of deep thought and solitude.

Another painting which depicts Hamlet was completed by Dagnan-Bouveret, entitled, "The Gravedigger Scene". The work is Impressionistic

in style, seeming to be more a study of light and atmospheric conditions than of Hamlet's mood and character. Hamlet is completely integrated in the painting; Horatio's arm is around him, further drawing the group together and creating a feeling of warm camaraderie. All three men are discussing the skull that Horatio holds in his hand; Hamlet is taking part in the conversation, rather than elevating himself from the group.

Hamlet's hand is out in a gesture toward the digger, as if he were asking him a question. The landscape in Dagnan- Bouveret's work is sunny,

warm, and flooded with flowers; Dagnan- Bouveret creates a comfortable setting, as opposed to the sublime and mysterious setting that Delacroix

Painted. Dagnan- Bouveret portrays Hamlet as an ordinary man posing a

question to the grave digger; Delacroix portrayed Hamlet as the Byronic

hero. It is the story of Hamlet which draws Delacroix's attention, the

character of Hamlet who is so similar to the Byronic hero, that grabs the

artist's interest. There is no hint of the separateness of Hamlet's

character in Fuseli's or in Dagnan- Bouveret's work as there is in

Delacroix's work, no reference to Hamlet's greater intelligence or solitary

bearing, which suggests that Delacroix was alone in his integration of

Byronic characteristics into his paintings.

Byron's influence can also be seen in Delacroix's painting of

"Romeo and Juliet" (1845). Delacroix paints Romeo and Juliet on the balcony, removed from society, isolated and alone. The lovers are not the typical figures after which men and women model their love; they are not ignorant of the world or of their problems. Like the Byronic hero, Delacroix's Romeo and Juliet are not idealistic role models; they are not the typical heroic figures who have no care in the world and are surrounded by sunshine and happiness. Delacroix paints Romeo and Juliet in a scene above the ordinary world, they are looking up at the sky with longing expressions, wishing for what could have been. Delacroix gives the figures gloomy and philosophic expressions, reflecting the intelligence of the pair; they know that their love is illicit but they do not care. Like the Byronic hero they believe that they are beyond human intelligence and that they are misunderstood by society. Delacroix completes the mood of isolation and doom by painting an overcast sky and by placing the lovers on a balcony which overlooks a distant town; the painting gives you the feeling that Romeo and Juliet are separated from society in a sublime setting.

Delacroix displays the emotion in the painting through the use of color; Romeo is wearing red, a color which symbolizes passion and love and Juliet is wearing white, a color symbolizing her purity and innocence.

Romeo and Juliet live past this scene only to take their own lives, believing the other to be dead and not being able to withstand the tortures of life alone. In a sense, the two of them together combined their personalities to form one Byronic hero; Juliet is alone, and misunderstood; her family has no sympathy for her forbidden love; Romeo is arrogant, not caring about his families dictates, but thrusting forth with his plans for a future with Juliet without his parents' approval. Together Romeo and Juliet exemplify the characteristics of the Byronic hero. Although these characters are not completely Byronic in their behavior, they do display some traits that are generally associated with the Byronic hero.

Delacroix was consistently drawn to Byronic qualities in literature, whether he had a conscious knowledge of what he was looking for, or he was just continually drawn to the same types of figures, his paintings repeatedly reflect Byron's influence on him.

The painting of "A Monument Belonging to the Capulets, Romeo and Paris dead; Juliet and Friar Lawrence", completed in the late 1700's by James Northcote is an example of how another artist portrays Romeo and Juliet. The painting is the typical Classical depiction; the artist's main concern is painting a scene with drama and ideal beauty. The figures of Romeo and Juliet are not isolated from society, as in Delacroix's painting.

Northcote's lovers do not have expressions of intellect or even of doom in this dismal scene. The expressions of the figures do little to relay the tragedy of the situation or to reveal the pain and anguish that Juliet must be suffering. Everything is ordered and painted to perfection with little care given to the symbolic nature of color so characteristic of Delacroix. Delacroix through the use of an overcast sky and the use of expression successfully conveys the feeling of impending doom even in a scene meant for love and passion. Northcote does not give the figures emotion or character as Delacroix does. Delacroix is concerned with characteristics of mood and the overall feeling of his painting; Northcote simply wants to paint a picture which contains figures in dramatic poses, with idealistic clothing and faces. Northcote paints line and dramatic light; Delacroix paints emotion and character. Northcote gives no hint of Byronic influence; no figure is isolated or given the slightest touch of superior intelligence. Northcote's figures are not moody or arrogant, they are just figures in an architectural setting.

C. E. Makowsky also painted Romeo and Juliet in "The Balcony Scene", a few decades after Delacroix. He portrays the couple in a loving embrace in a light flooded setting. The couple is seated and secluded from the world around them, they are not placed above society as in Delacroix's

work. Unlike Delacroix's depiction, Makowsky's Romeo and Juliet appear to be the idealistic lovers; they gaze lovingly into each others eyes, apparently unaware of any impending doom. Makowsky appears to be more concerned with the elaborate dress and ideal beauty of the couple than with portraying the impending doom of the situation. Delacroix avoids the use of bright and illuminating light and in its place paints a dreary and ominous sky. Delacroix removes Romeo and Juliet from society, while Makowsky places them along side of nature, in a living and blooming garden. It seems as though Makowsky's figures would only have to walk around the corner to talk to another human being, whereas Delacroix's Romeo and Juliet seem to be completely isolated. From the expressions upon the faces of Makowsky's couple they could be any couple in love, while Delacroix's couple, with their longing expressions leave no room for doubt as to their identity. Northcote and Makowsky concern themselves with illustrating scenes from Shakespeare which contain drama and idealism, whereas Delacroix manipulated the scenes to incorporate the characteristics of the Byronic hero.

In 1853, Delacroix painted "Christ on the Cross", a religious scene in which Christ is portrayed as the dying Byronic hero. Delacroix painted this theme many times, showing that he had placed great thought

in this subject. Christ is passionate in his teachings and is torn by remorse. Christ had knowledge above and beyond that of the ordinary man; his intelligence came from the ultimate source. Like the Byronic hero, Christ harbors the tortuous memory of an enormous guilt that drove him to an inevitable doom; but unlike the Byronic hero, Christ's guilt was not nameless; Christ would suffer and die for the sins of mankind. Christ, like the Byronic hero, pursues his own ends against any opposition, according to self-generated moral codes. Christ faces extreme opposition; he is persecuted in every land and can go nowhere without an attack from someone. Christ is misunderstood and still remains devoted to his cause. He is oblivious to human customs and ideals; he will drink water brought to him by an 'unclean' woman in a time period in which society dictated that men should not even talk to women in public. People were drawn to him because of his mysterious ways and words; but Christ was abandoned and left to die alone on the cross.

Delacroix portrays Christ as looking up toward heaven, at his inevitable fate. The figures of his mother, Mary Magdalene and the other mourners are beneath him, but he no longer recognizes their presence, he is in a higher place. The clouds are separating and a bright light is emerging, drawing Christ towards it. The body of Christ is highlighted,

while the people below are in the dark; Delacroix uses the lighting as well as the coloring to show Christ's importance and to draw the viewer's attention to the central and most important figure.

Delacroix portrays Christ as the dying Byronic hero. In Delacroix's painting, Christ is nailed to the cross in a majestic pose; he is not drooping or sagging at his bonds as in the work of other artists; he is shown with strength and power. Even in death, Christ remains strong and calm. Delacroix's view differs distinctly from that of the sculptor, Auguste Preault; the sculptor's work, entitled "Crucifix" (1840), gives an altogether different interpretation of the scene. Preault presents Christ in agony, feeling the pain of humankind. Preault's Christ is not heroic or majestic, but is hanging painfully from the nails in the cross and has his mouth opened in a cry of anguish. Preault is not concerned with the portrayal of Christ as the Byronic hero.

Christ is the ideal Byronic figure, as Delacroix must have realized; he painted scenes from Christ's life many times, not only the crucifixion, but also other important points in the life of Christ. The figure of Christ exhibits many of the Byronic hero's characteristics.

Delacroix painted another scene from the life of Christ entitled, "Christ on the Lake of Genesareth" (1854). In this work, Christ and his

disciples are traveling across the lake when a vicious storm overtakes them. Christ is asleep, while his followers fight to keep their boat under control. Delacroix contrasts the frantic action of the disciples with the peaceful slumber of Christ. Christ's adherents, believing that he is ignorant of the storm, wonder why their leader has turned his back on them and ask him why he is not helping to keep their craft afloat. Christ, however, is not blind to the storm or to the work of the men; he is testing their faith and of course they are found lacking. Delacroix portrays Christ as the Byronic hero; he is set apart and above the action taking place in the scene. He is not ignorant or oblivious, but he is aware of a higher power and is in control of a superior intelligence. Christ is alone and is misunderstood, the men believe his lack of attention to be neglect, not a test of faith. Delacroix painted Christ in a deep sleep showing that he is in a world above; no mortal could sleep, undisturbed, throughout the tumultuous storm ravaging the other men.

Delacroix portrays Christ in much the same manner as he did Sardanapalus in "The Death of Sardanapalus". Christ is reclined and seemingly oblivious to his surroundings; Sardanapalus is relaxed on his huge bed unaware of the conflagration which consumes the room. Both the figure of Christ and the figure of Sardanapalus appear to be above the

scenes of danger and of destruction which surround them; each one is aloof and isolated from the frantic action throughout the remainder of their scenes. Neither Christ or Sardanapalus concerns himself with the trials and tribulations which the other characters in the paintings must deal with; each is above the problems of ordinary man. Both Christ and Sardanapalus take on the characteristics of the Byronic hero. Delacroix's portrayal of Christ is very similar to his portrayal of Sardanapalus; the parallelism of the two works demonstrates that influence from Byron is still present in Delacroix's paintings.

Delacroix had a great interest in the portrayal of Christ as the Byronic hero. Christ was a hero to humanity, what better figure to utilize as the Byronic hero than one which all of his viewers would recognize. The public enjoyed scenes which portrayed Christ, paintings which all of society recognized, even if they could not see that Delacroix was portraying Christ as the Byronic hero.

In 1856, Delacroix took on a subject which had achieved great popularity in France, that of the majestic king of beasts: the lion. Delacroix painted many scenes portraying the lion, from the lion devouring its prey, to lion hunts. Delacroix obviously saw the possibilities of heroism which the great beast offered to his art. Delacroix paints the lion

with characteristics taken from the Byronic hero in the painting of the "Lion Hunt" (1856). The work presents the power and ferocity of the lion, but it also goes beyond the lion's strength. The painting is a scene of war between the lion and man: a moment of death, fear, and struggle for life. Man views the lion as a creature who presented a threat to man, a beast which could destroy a man with ease. In a similar manner, the Byronic hero posed a threat to the normal man; the Byronic hero was intelligent and arrogant; he could make an ordinary man feel insignificant and unimportant. The lion was misunderstood and feared; he was therefore hunted and killed. 'The lion keeps apart from the horde, though feeling, like the Byronic hero, that he is it's leader' (Huyghe 249). The lion wanted to be left alone, left to his own world; the lion wanted to roam his lands freely, without a constant threat from mankind. The lion was revered by man; the capture or slaughter of one of the great beasts was seen to be a victory worthy of much praise. Delacroix wanted to paint the majesty of the magnificent creature, but at the same time, he wanted to show that this fearsome being was misunderstood and alone in its world. The lion was king of beasts, feared by all other animals and by man. Delacroix forces the viewer to feel something for the lion, either pity, or anger caused by the slaughter of such a beautiful and majestic creature.

The painting gives its audience a feeling of horror, but also a sense of outrage that so great an animal should be hunted. Delacroix, by placing the lion on top of a man and a horse is placing the lion in a superior position, in a place, like that of the Byronic hero, above man and above other animals. Delacroix's lion is alone, isolated, and contains a heroic character comparable to that of the Byronic hero.

Other artists had also worked with the lion as a subject, artists such as Antoine-Louis Barye, who sculpted the "Lion Crushing a Serpent". Barye's portrayal is both majestic and heroic, showing the immense power of the great beast. Barye sculpts the lion with the rippling muscles and with its mouth open in a ferocious roar; he portrays the power and the beauty of a creature of which humankind stood in awe. Delacroix must have seen this sculpture, because he painted a copy of it in 1856. Though Barye successfully completed a replica of the lion's power and strength, Delacroix went further, Delacroix painted the lion as a victim of society. In Delacroix's work, the lion is being hunted and victimized in much the same way that Christ was persecuted, that Hamlet was ridiculed, and that the Byronic hero was criticized. Barye's portrayal presents the lion as the hunter, as the creature who does the victimizing; Barye's lion is the king of beasts, the creature who rules all and is envied by all. Delacroix's lion

is not envied or held in high esteem; the lion in Delacroix's painting is being trampled and stabbed as an object of fear, mistrust and hatred. Like the Byronic hero, Delacroix's lion is persecuted for his arrogance, intelligence and his disregard for human morals and codes.

Delacroix also paints the characteristics of the Byronic hero into figures from the Old Testament. An example of Delacroix's Old Testament themes is "Jacob Wrestling an Angel" (1856- 61). In this scene, Delacroix presents Jacob as the Byronic hero. Jacob is placed apart from the other characters in the scene; he is engaged in battle with God's messenger. The other men in the painting tend their sheep and keep to their place in the world. The temerity and the arrogance of Jacob's character give him the confidence to wrestle with and beat an angel from Heaven. That Jacob would even conceive of the idea to fight an angel places him, like the Byronic hero, above the ordinary man in thought and in character. Most men would cower in the presence of such a holy being, but not Jacob. Jacob is no mere mortal; he is intelligent and believes himself to be on the same level as the angel. Jacob is no ordinary man, but is, like the Byronic hero, akin to a god. Jacob is the Byronic hero in Old Testament form, a figure that the public would recognize, but also a figure which presented Delacroix with an opportunity to paint the Byronic hero.

Delacroix was inspired by Byron and by his poetry; the painter was obsessed with the Byronic hero. Delacroix incorporated Byronic characteristics into many, if not all of his works; but the presence of characteristics from the Byronic hero in Delacroix's later paintings does not mean that Delacroix was avidly reading Byron's poetry. He was obviously reading plays from Shakespeare, stories from the Bible and works from many other authors. Delacroix was influenced by many literary sources, but the power of Byron's poetry remained in his work. It is clear from examining examples of similar subject matter, painted by other artists, that Delacroix's art is distinct in its Byronic attributes. Delacroix may not have been purposely painting Byronic qualities into his pictures, but the concepts of the Byronic hero do appear in Delacroix's later paintings, which proves that Byron had a powerful and lasting effect on Delacroix.

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2. Eugene Delacroix. "Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi" 1826.
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Spencer
1949



at the end of July. Seven more paintings were added and the Gallery reopened in March 1800, but popular success continued to elude it. After its final closure a number of paintings were purchased by Fuseli's friends and patrons, including Coutts and John Julius Angerstein. However, the lack of success of the Milton Gallery had impelled him, in 1799, to apply for the post of Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy in order to obtain a reliable income from which to support his wife. He began work as professor in 1801, and, elected Keeper of the Royal Academy at the end of 1804, he resigned as Professor the following year. P. C. B.

2. *The Infant Shakespeare attended by Nature and the Passions*

Benjamin Smith
1790-1800

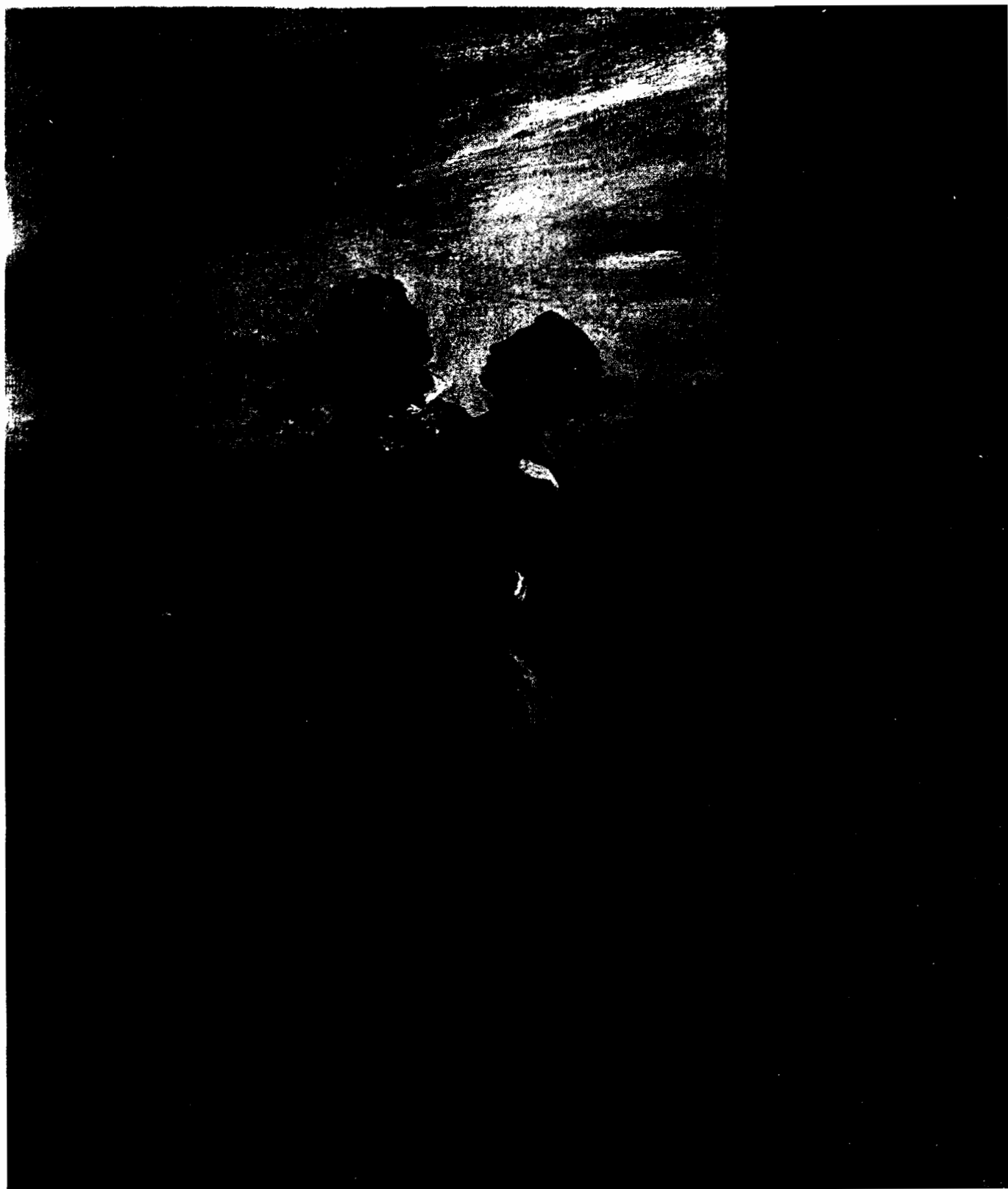


Sub-titled: Nature is represented with her face unveiled to her favourite Child, who is placed between Joy and Sorrow.

On the right hand of Nature are Love, Hatred & Jealousy: on her left hand, Anger, Envy, & Fear



DAGNAN BOUVERET. — GRAVE DIGGER SCENE
(Hamlet).





66. *A Monument Belonging to the Capulets, Romeo and Paris dead; Juliet and Friar Lawrence*

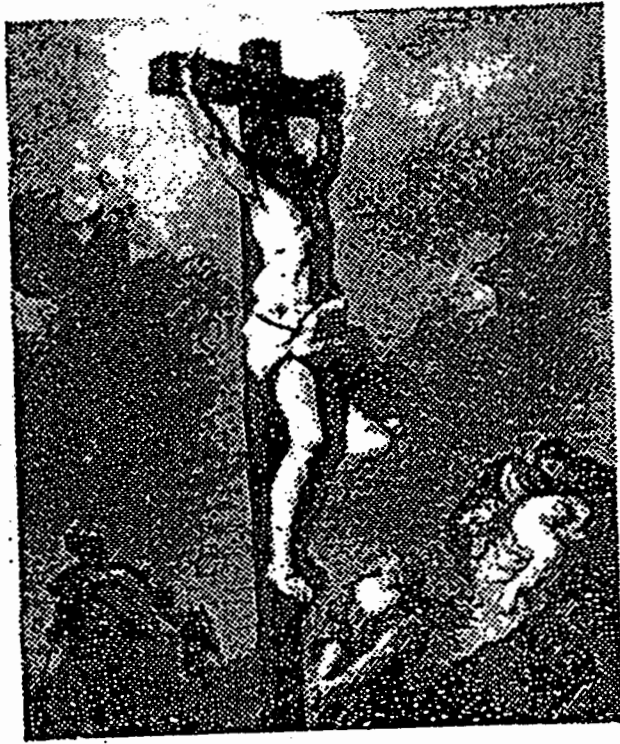
James Northcote R.A.
(Plymouth 1746–1831 London)
Oil on canvas, 108½ x 132 inches
(276 x 335 cm)

PROVENANCE: Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery;
Christie's, Boydell Gallery sale, Third Day, 20 May, 1805, lot 51, sold to G. Stainforth Esq. for £210
Northbrook Collection, Stratton Park sale, 27th Nov., 1929, lot 492
LITERATURE: Stephen Gwynn,

Memories of an Eighteenth Century Painter, London, 1898, p.273, no. 254,
under 'Pictures Painted in the Year 1789' — 'Last Scene in 'Romeo and Juliet' (Shakespeare for Boydell — print by Simon)
Winifred H. Friedman, *Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery*, New York



MAKOWSKY. — BALCONY SCENE (*Romeo and Juliet*).

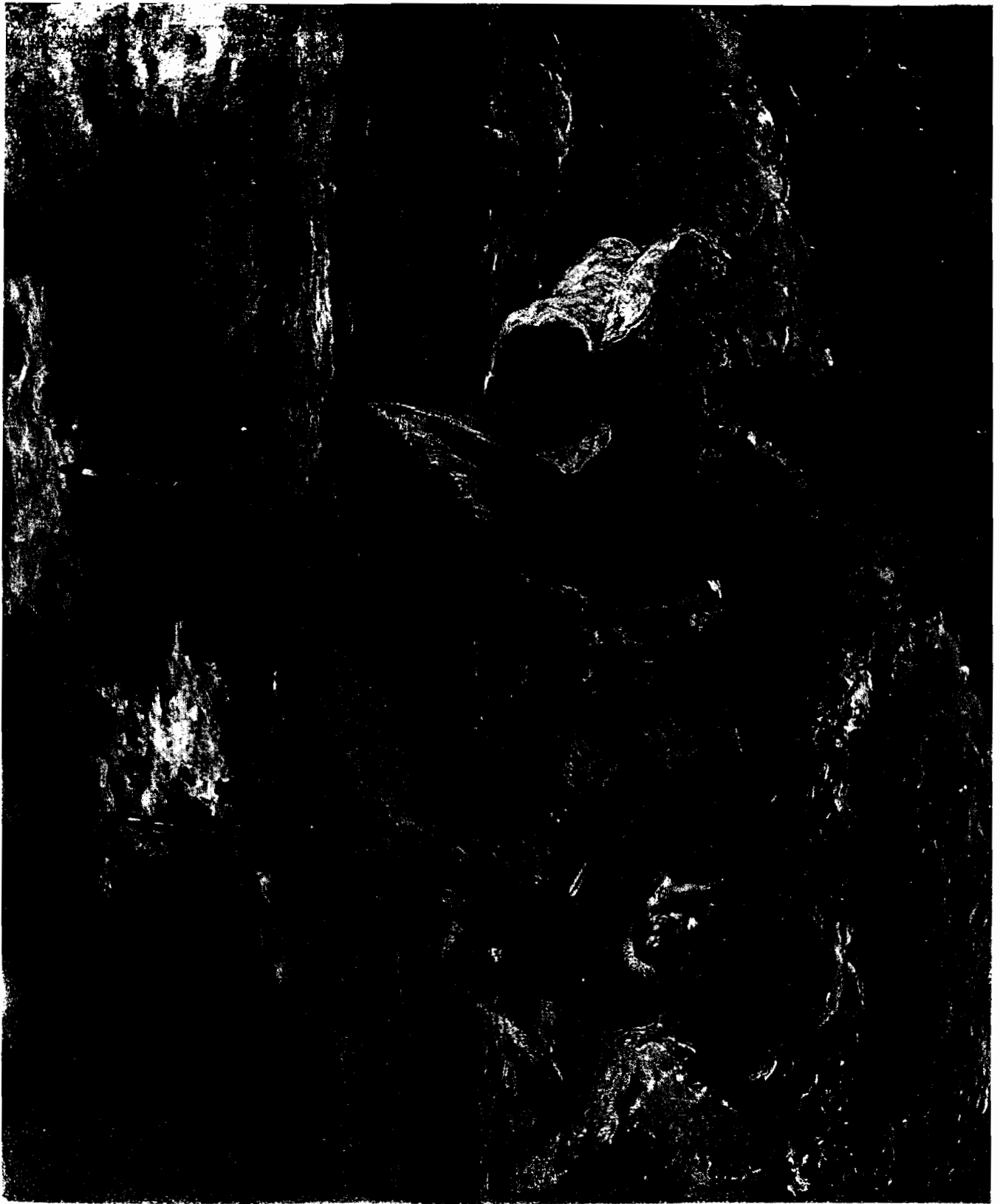




124. AUGUSTE PREMLT. Crucifix. 1840. Wood. height 102".
St.-Gervais-et-Protais, Paris

size wooden *Crucifix* of 1840 (fig. 124), his boldest work after *Tuerie* and, artistically, his most impressive. Here again we meet a blend of Neo-Baroque and Neo-Gothic, but their integration is coherent and powerful. Christ's muscular and sensuously beautiful body makes his agony all the more impressive—so much so that the work ended up in a fairly obscure Paris church after having been rejected by the clergy of two more important ones. The *Crucifix* is a notable achievement also as a feat of woodturning, a rarely used technique in an age

The revival of religious art had been encouraged by the Restoration, and the government under Louis-Philippe continued the same policy. In fact, earlier, an earlier source in Romantic literature, in addition to the traditional themes of the Gothic churches, we encounter religious sculpture as a primary inspiration even if their ultimate goal was secular. In view of the Romantic fascination with the macabre, it is no surprise that two favorite characters were Cain and Satan. Both had, of course, been represented countless times before, but the "antiheroes" in sculpture was a novel idea. As early as 1820, Barye submitted a sculpture, *Accursed of God* (now lost) for the Prix de Rome; it was the life-size group *Cain and His Race* that brought Antoine Étex his great success in 1853 and the commission for his relief on the arch of the Étoile (see above, p. 118). He also ordered *Cain and His Race* executed in bronze, now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Paris; the plaster was shown at the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851. Its popular appeal is evidenced by the bronze reductions (fig. 125). The composition of the group shows Cain, his wife, and two children huddled together as if for mutual protection against the Lord's wrath. Étex may well have been inspired by Byron's drama *Cain*, of 1821, but the latter's source in Salomon Gessner's prose tale *Cain*, of 1758, which was immediately translated into every Western language and enjoyed great success. The Swiss author viewed Cain as a tragic figure rather than a villain; he did so by postulating a rational motive for the murder of Abel: his Cain is haunted by the belief that Abel's descendants will enslave him. In contrast, Cain can lead a harmonious and leisurely life, his life nourished by the forced labor of his wife in the fields. Byron's Cain is closer to the original; too is far more human and pitiable. The New Testament original. As Cain's counterpart, the Dead Abel became an equally popular subject for sculptors, although many of these sculptures of beautiful nude youths are barely distinguishable from their Neoclassic predecessors. For example, Hyacinth, even after Duprè's version of 1842 (see figs. 81 and 82). Similarly, the Tempted may be hard to tell apart from the Venus Victorious (such as Thorvaldsen's, fig. 51), and even Eve Disconsolate often confused with Venus that outweighs her status (see figs. 77 and 78). As for Satan, he is regarded as a sculptural subject in







120. ANTOINE-LOUIS BARYE. *Lion Crushing a Serpent*. 1833. Bronze. length 70". Louvre, Paris

consisted of small bronzes, including reductions of the *Lion Crushing a Serpent* in various sizes. As government patronage declined, he depended increasingly on the sale of these pieces to private collectors.

e might strike be-
n immobilizing it,
im. Moreover, the
th and the snake as





Jacob Resting with the Angel, 1856-1861

swirl of masses illuminated with flashes of light and color, he holds his cluttered and riotous scene firmly in

Lord's emissary. As if to emphasize Jacob's loneliness, Delacroix has made a low-key still life of his hat and scarf.