
Daumier's Expressive Heads*

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RÉSUMÉ

D'une manière générale, l'essai traite de la vitalité expressive des têtes de Daumier et examine le dessin d'une tête d'expression du British Museum. D'une part, nous rattachons l'origine de l'esquisse à des théories que proposait Lebrun en 1656, et, d'autre part, nous attirons l'attention sur l'influence des trois-cent quatre-vingt-un

mascarons, sous les consoles du Pont Neuf de Paris, sur un groupe de dessins de Daumier. Nous retraçons l'histoire des mascarons de leur création, aux alentours de 1606, jusqu'à leurs restaurations de 1816 à 1820 et de 1852 à 1855.

Throughout Honoré Daumier's entire *oeuvre* the expressive vitality of his heads of men occurs as regularly as a pulse beat, from the most trivial of his caricatures to the most profoundly moving (and in some cases psychologically disturbing) of his images. The notion of the *tête d'expression*, or expressive head revealing specific strong emotions, was a long-established tradition in academic art when Daumier was a young man, and what were by then stereotyped conventions for expressive *distortion* were exploited by professional cartoonists as well. However, Daumier's art went beyond that of the cartoonist, and this article attempts to show how he drew upon various sources, including academic tradition, aspects of decorative sculpture which he could see in Paris, and his visual memory for the multitude of physiognomies which he observed in the streets—as his biographer Arsène Alexandre put it—to form his own intensely personal language of facial expression.

The first indication that the gift of visual memory might shape his art was surely the 36 clay busts

of parliamentary deputies commissioned by Philippon, the editor of *La Caricature*. These little heads, executed between 1831 and about 1833 after watching his subjects in the legislative assembly, are far from uniform in style. They are not even all caricatures, in the sense of distortion of features. Some, like those of Gallois and Delort, for example, are relatively "straight" portraits, while the bony protrusions of Guizot's face are set in a rather tragic expression (Fig. 94). And even when the features of those whom the artist presumably particularly disliked show violent distortions, their wicked-looking faces seem to breathe with life.

There is only one drawing of ca. 1849 by Daumier actually catalogued by Maison with the given title *Tête d'expression* (Fig. 95).¹ This title sounds an unlikely one for Daumier himself to

* I would like to thank David McTavish for his constructive criticism after reading a first draft of this text. I would also like to acknowledge the basic research tool of the late K. E. Maison's *catalogue raisonné* of Daumier's paintings and drawings. His own collection of Daumier photographs has been deposited with the Courtauld Institute of Art, London University, for future reference by scholars.

EDITORIAL NOTE: In addition to the literature cited by the author, cf. *Burlington Magazine*, xc:11 (September 1970), 623, for an additional "quatre études de 'têtes'" published by K. E. Maison.

1 K. E. Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Graphic Society, 1968), II (Watercolours and Drawings), 29. The title was very likely "given" by its earliest owners for reasons to be discussed. Maison points out the term *croquis d'expression* was a common generic description given to studies of heads in the late nineteenth and even early twentieth centuries (7). However, for an artist of Daumier's calibre, the distinction between a *croquis* (a fragmentary sketch) and a *tête d'expression* (in the traditional sense) is a fine one. I shall argue that his imaginative vision both was directed to contemporary stimuli and stretched back to earlier traditions. This particular *Tête d'expression* is claimed by Charles Martine (L. Marotte and C. Martine, *Dessins de Maîtres Français: Honoré Daumier* [Paris, 1924], cat. 37) to have been included in Daumier's 1878 exhibition at Durand-Ruel's gallery, presumably under that title, but this is not proven (see note 11).

have used at that time, because the term was then still applied to a competition held for students of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, in which a prize was given for an expressive head drawn from nature or modelled from a living person.² Daumier's head is essentially a brush drawing in brown ink on a fairly large scale, with no sign of preliminary underdrawing in charcoal, black chalk, or any other medium. Since the brush strokes go right up to the edge of the sheet on both sides and at the bottom, it is most likely to have been cut down, or perhaps cut out, from a cartoon for a painting: stylistically it is reminiscent of the freely drawn figures in the unfinished painting *We Want Barabbas!* (or *Ecce Homo*) in Essen Museum and now generally dated about 1849-52.³ Daumier's drawing does not relate to any known painting, however, and its subject, while it seems to imply some theme of human misery, remains obscure. How precisely did it acquire the title *Tête d'expression*?

In 1668 Charles Le Brun had given a famous lecture intended to put the theory of expression on a formal footing. He discussed and categorized a wide range of human emotions caused by different psychological states, which he (and others) thought could be perceived through significant changes in the muscular disposition of the features of the face. He illustrated his lecture with drawings of what he considered to be exemplary cases of these states and their typical appearances. Le Brun's original drawings are now in the Cabinet des Dessins in the Louvre: the "expressive heads" are drawn in black and brown chalk, while more schematic figures ("measured expressions") are drawn with a pen. Some may have been made before the lecture and some after; but all were done with a view to publication which was, however, only achieved posthumously, in 1696.⁴ Le

Brun's intention was to use physiological understanding of the passions as a basis on which to build rules which, once learnt, could be applied beyond the limited number of examples described.⁵ Unfortunately, his illustrations were not used in the way they were intended but rather as a pattern book, often without text, for students to copy from. Le Brun's interpretations of human expressions came under heavy criticism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but even so, varying editions of his work continued to be produced up to about 1840, so that it would have been readily available to artists of Daumier's generation.⁶

Jennifer Montagu has argued that a set of rules for expression would have been anathema to the romantics.⁷ Nevertheless Delacroix, for example, must have had some image like Le Brun's *Douleur aiguë* (acute pain) in mind when envisaging the heads of the damned in his painting *The Barque of Dante* of 1822. As for Daumier, his visual memory was a seething cauldron of interconnecting images: his so-called *Tête d'expression* is of course no student's work, but closer to the level of expression of one of Gericault's painted studies known as *Les Fous* or, to make a comparison with Delacroix, of the head of the agonized old woman in the centre foreground of the *Massacre at Chios*.

The equivalent for such emotional involvement for Daumier would have been his theme of *The Refugees* in 1849, when the demise of the Second Republic was already imminent. Is this drawing then a fragment of some larger sketch for an expressive subject, or may we attribute to it some specific emotion portrayed, as in Le Brun's drawing inscribed *Leffroy* (Terror) (Fig. 96)? In the latter case, terror, despair, or supplication could be three possible readings of Daumier's "expression"—all close to the extreme end of the emotional scale.⁸ The very strong linear rhythms heighten the emotional expression, just as they do

2 See Jennifer Montagu, "Charles Le Brun's *Conférence sur l'Expression générale et particulière*" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1959), 172ff. The prize was founded by the Comte de Caylus in 1759, and it was one of two prizes to survive the Revolution (the other being the prize for a painting of the male torso). After 1833 separate prizes were awarded for painting and sculpture. By the 1860s the prize had faded to a pointless exercise (Montagu, "Charles Le Brun's *Conférence*," 493).

3 See K. E. Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Graphic Society, 1968), I (The Paintings), 1-31.

4 For an account of the publications see Montagu, "Charles Le Brun's *Conférence*," 287ff. Twenty plates containing 57 heads were published by Le Clerc in 1696, but the first complete edition of Le Brun's text, with engraved plates after his drawings accompanied by pages of appropriate descriptions, is *Conférence de Monsieur Le Brun sur l'Expression générale et particulière* (Amsterdam: J. L. de Lonne; Paris: E. Picart, 1698). For the original drawings, see Jean Guiffrey and Pierre Marcel, *Inventaire Général des Dessins de l'Ecole Française* (Musée du Louvre et Musée de Versailles), IX, nos. 6464ff., and the exhibition catalogue *Charles Le Brun* (Musée de Versailles, 1963), 303ff., cat. nos. 130-32.

5 Montagu, "Charles Le Brun's *Conférence*," 158. This is the main point of Montagu's excellently argued thesis.

6 Montagu, "Charles Le Brun's *Conférence*," 287ff. Montagu adds that it was familiar to actors. Another book with significant illustrations of expressive heads which went through several editions was Sir Charles Bell's *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression as connected with the Fine Arts* (1806; 3rd ed. enlarged, London: John Murray, 1844). To some extent Bell's approach is in opposition to Le Brun's, but his illustration and description of *Fear* (165) is remarkably similar to that of Le Brun. Bell's book was well known, though we must assume that Daumier had not read the text.

7 Montagu, "Charles Le Brun's *Conférence*," 10ff.

8 This would not be the only instance of an inexplicit sketch by Daumier acquiring the connotation of "terror." For example, a group of five frightened-looking heads given the title *Etude pour une "Scène d'Émeute"*, K. E. Maison, *Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 168, and *Etude d'une femme épouvantée*, 195.

in Le Brun's drawing, although the baroque academician is using a more muscular and youthful model from which to create his powerful curves. In both drawings the eyebrows rise in the middle, and the muscles draw towards each other; the nose and the nostrils are lifted up; the eyes are wide open (though the upper lids, which in Le Brun's drawing are hidden under the eyebrows, droop in Daumier's because of the age of his model); the eyeballs turn slightly inwards (though the lower part of the lid is swollen in Le Brun's and flaccid in Daumier's); the muscles of the neck—gaunt tendons in Daumier's case—and cheeks are extremely prominent, and make a fold at the sides of the nostrils; the mouth, wide open in Le Brun's model, is just dropped open in Daumier's, with the upper lip sucked in; everything is strongly marked, as much on the forehead as around the eyes. So far, I have been giving a paraphrase of Le Brun's text on "Terror" in his lecture,⁹ as well as a description of his drawing. Daumier's image, however, is made more sinister when he reworks his drawing with another brush.¹⁰ The eyebrows that rise up in the middle are now brushed horizontally across by two dark bars, the one on the right sticking out beyond the contour of his profile; the forehead is made more wrinkled and continues the agitated movements rising up from the neck; there is no hair left to stand on end, but the skull is silhouetted against two dark patches of ink. The effect is Goya-like.

This drawing was in the collection of one of Daumier's private patrons in Paris, Monsieur Lemaire, although it was not, apparently, one of the small group of works lent by Lemaire to Daumier's retrospective exhibition in 1878.¹¹ Be that as it

may, after consideration of the similarities to and the differences from Le Brun's "Terror," it becomes difficult not to believe that Daumier did intend it as a "tête d'expression," though it is so far removed in style from Le Brun's classical formula for "Terror" that it could be taken as a parody of it.¹² Terror is most terrifying when its cause is inexplicit or inexplicable. Le Brun's mode of analysis does not seem to demand a cause: it is a performance in style, like an actor on the classical stage. Daumier manages to convey that there might be a very real and imminent cause for this man's expression, although within this convention he cannot be explicit. His contemporaries may have seen its meaning more directly if it were drawn ca. 1849-51, not only as an ironic parody of its academic prototype but also as a sinister comment on the political situation of his time.¹³ By his contemporaries, I mean his friends like Michelet, who instantly perceived the statuette of *Ratapoil* as a parody of Louis Napoleon when he saw it in Daumier's studio during the same period. The intention of this *tête d'expression* is, however, less explicit than that. If it was to be part of some larger composition, or perhaps a series of expressive heads, such a project was not carried out.

Such extended analysis need not be applied to every other example of Daumier's heads to be examined here—it will be evident that they are all "expressive"—but some interesting variations are worth studying. His facility with the art of the grimace was particularly useful to him when applied to his satirical representations of advocates and judges—in lithographs in the 1840s and in an increasing number of drawings and watercolours in the 1850s and 1860s.¹⁴ Their sinister effect was noticed by the Goncourt brothers in 1865: they described a watercolour they had seen of a group of lawyers "with laughs that terrify," comparing them to "the ugliness of those horrible antique masks in a clerk's office" and to fauns in

9 Le Brun's text, as printed following the engraving (given the title *La Fraieur* in the 1698 Picart edition), is as follows: "La Fraieur quand elle est excessive, fait que celui qui l'a receuë, à le sourcil fort élevé par le milieu, & les muscles qui servent au mouvement de ces parties, fort marqués & enflés, & pressés l'un contre l'autre, s'abaissant sur le nez qui doit paroître retiré en haut & les narines de même: les yeux doivent paroître entièrement ouverts, la paupière de dessus cachée sous le sourcil, le blanc de l'oeil doit être environné de rouge, la prunelle doit paroître comme égarée, située plus au bas de l'oeil que du côté d'en haut, le dessous de la paupière doit paroître enflé & livide, les muscles du nez & les mains aussi enflés, les muscles des joues extrêmement marqués & formés en point de chaque côté des narines, le bouche sera fort ouverte, & les coins sera fort apparents, tout sera beaucoup marqué tant à la partie du front qu'autour des yeux. . ." (15-16).

10 The dragged out, dry brushstrokes in some places suggest a binding medium other than water being used. On the edge of the right shoulder there is actually a thumbprint on the paper in the same colour ink, suggesting that Daumier had got his hand sticky with the mixture.

11 At least it is not listed as one in Arsène Alexandre, *Honoré Daumier* (Paris, 1888), "catalogue" (Aquarelles et Dessins), 376-79. See note 1 for Charles Martine's allegation that it

was there: he may have known of some tradition to that effect. In any case it had obviously become a "collector's piece."

12 The relation of the two artists is aptly summed up by Montagu in this sentence: "[Daumier] will curve an eyebrow into a line as impossible as any in Le Brun, not in accordance with the *a priori* laws of expressive movement, but under the guidance of his own critical and creative reactions" (Montagu, "Charles Le Brun's *Conférence*," 227).

13 In the course of writing this article it has become apparent to me that part of the fascination exercised by Daumier's "expressive heads" is their apparent signification of ideas and situations now current. Mine is not the only post-Daumier generation to have experienced this sensation.

14 These are among the most frequently reproduced of Daumier's works. For representative groups see, for example, Roger Passeron, *Daumier* (New York, 1981), Figs. 159-71, and Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 557-687.

corybantic orgies.¹⁵ This connection made by the Goncourts with the tradition of faun- or satyr-like masks will be taken up again below. Daumier's lawyers were also "recognized," as though having a reality outside the normal frame of time, by visitors to his retrospective exhibition in 1878, according to a story recounted by Arsène Alexandre, his first biographer. On seeing these drawings, Gambetta thought he knew each of the advocates by name, but he was corrected by Daumier's friend, the sculptor Geoffroy Dechaume, who said that they were never done from life but from Daumier's imagination and his knowledge of advocates—"and above all *the Advocate*"—whom he knew better than they knew themselves.¹⁶

Elsewhere in his book, Alexandre expounds his theme of the universality of Daumier's types as perhaps stimulated by the casts of fragments of Trajan's column which he had in his studio, translated into contemporary terms:

Aussi a-t-il donné à ses déesses, à dessein, des types et des allures de bourgeoises, à ses capitaines et à ses héros de ces bonnes têtes que l'on rencontre non dans les bois sacrés, mais *dans les rues*. . . Alciabade est un fat que vous avez aperçu plus d'une fois sur le boulevard, se promenant d'un air prétentieux et suivi de son caniche tondu suivant les plus purs preceptes du Pont-Neuf. . .¹⁷

But if the Pont-Neuf had become a fashionable place to walk one's dog in the 1880s, it seems less likely that it was so in the 1840s when Daumier lived nearby on the Ile St. Louis. This famous bridge, which links the Ile de la Cité with both the left bank and the right bank sections of Paris, then still bore memories of the revolutions of 1789 and 1830. The crowds that gathered on the central *terre-plein* between its two arms and walked by the little shops on the *demi-lunes* on its piers¹⁸ must have represented a cross-section of Parisian social life, high and low. Was that another source of Daumier's physiognomic inspiration? Perhaps so, but he would have found no corybantic satyrs here, unless their spirits were conjured up by the faces of the itinerant clowns and mountebanks, street singers and hawkers who frequented the area in his time. If, as Alexandre pointed out, Daumier's facial types look superficially similar, it

is due to the very personal mark of his drawing style, as a violin playing different airs may have the same timbre.¹⁹ In truth the variation of types represented is considerable. Even a limited selection of Daumier's drawings of different heads will suffice to make this point.

Daumier drew thousands of heads but few portraits (if we exclude caricatures of individuals). An exception may be the *Head of a Man*, thought to be possibly a portrait of Michelet (Fig. 97).²⁰ This quite large drawing in sanguine is certainly not grimacing or distorted. The flowing lines of its construction, curved both in contours and shading, are reminiscent of Daumier's lithographic style in mid-career, and it may have been made not long after their first meeting in 1851, when Michelet so much admired the statuette of *Ratapoil*. The high bony forehead, long nose, hooded eyes, sunken cheeks, and full mouth may well be a record of the historian's features, full of nervous energy even in repose. This would most likely have been made from memory, perhaps of a moment when Michelet was contemplating something in Daumier's studio. The seriousness of "Michelet"'s expression may be compared to a powerful study in black chalk of the heads of two workers (Fig. 98). The head of the man in the foreground, with his cloth cap and determined jaw, is reminiscent of the printer in Daumier's well-known lithograph *Hands off the Press!* published in March 1834,²¹ but this drawing could be later in date. On the other hand, there are few Daumier drawings extant that use this system of regular parallel-hatched lines of shading which is found in his earlier lithographs. The head of the man behind has almost no contours at all, as though this were an academic exercise in chiaroscuro. However, the total image is far from academic, in the sense of being merely an exercise in technique, and we may well be looking at an early drawing of expressive heads of the working class—those implacable foes of the bourgeoisie that Daumier was unable to represent as such in his published prints when Louis-Philippe's regime imposed political censorship between 1835 and 1848.

Somewhat surprisingly, with the coming of the Second Republic in 1848, Daumier emerged as a painter with strong baroque leanings in style, and this is also reflected in his drawings. The *Study of a Man's Head* (Fig. 99), which is related to the central figure of the painting *A Family on the Barricades*

15 Edmond and Jules Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. Robert Ricatte (Paris, 1956), vii, 60, entry for 15 March 1865: ". . . Les têtes sont effrénées, avec les grimaces, des rires qui font peur. Ces hommes noirs ont je ne sais quelle laideur d'horribles masques antiques dans un greffe. Les avoués souriantes prennent un air de corybantes. Il y a du faune dans ces avocats macabres."

16 Alexandre, *Honoré Daumier*, 355.

17 Alexandre, *Honoré Daumier*, 182-83.

18 These "boutiques" survived until 1854, when they were replaced by benches or "banquettes." Adolphe Joanne, *Paris Illustré*—Guides Joanne (Paris, 1863), 101ff.

19 Alexandre, *Honoré Daumier*, 206ff.

20 Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, 11, 3.

21 Published for *l'Association Mensuelle* (Loys Delteil 133). The English title given here is a free translation of the inscription *Liberté de la Presse* and the legend beneath the print. It is often reproduced: see, for example, Passeron, Fig. 47.

(Narodni Gallery, Prague), is executed in black chalk, charcoal, brush and wash, varnished with gum arabic. This technique of mixed media, found also in the large drawing of *Silenus* which Daumier sent to the Salon in 1850, is closer to a painting than to a drawing process; indeed it represents Daumier's characteristic combination of the two. Baroque in its linear rhythms and in its dramatic chiaroscuro, this powerful image of a revolutionary is the active counterpart to the contemplative head of "Michelet": an expressive distillation of the republican spirit which, momentarily for Daumier in 1848, would have been both triumphant and optimistic.²² This spirit did not last long. While thousands of socialists were being deported in 1849, after Louis-Napoleon became President, Daumier was producing drawings, paintings, and at least one clay relief on the theme of refugees in flight. It is to this era that the so-called *Tête d'expression* (Fig. 95) belongs.

The epithet "expressive" could also be applied to a group of portrait drawings of his young sculptor friend Carrier-Belleuse (Fig. 100). This rotund head, like a ripe fruit with luxurious vegetation adhering to it, was drawn four times, twice in profile and twice full face.²³ A pair of drawings executed in charcoal, of which the most fully realized is illustrated here (Fig. 100), skilfully summarizes the sculptor's flamboyant and rather pompous bearing, but they do not give the impression of caricatures: that was done in a another pair of drawings in pen and ink, which exaggerate this fleshy chin into a bloated ball, and are closer to the lithograph cartoon of Carrier-Belleuse that was published in *Le Boulevard* on 24 May 1863. There he was shown modelling two busts simultaneously. In the charcoal drawing, on the other hand, the strong structural lines that build up the forms of the head, both by interlocking contours and by banks of shading strokes in various directions across the forms, evoke a feeling of sculptural solidity more seriously in sympathy with the subject. The viewpoint from slightly below adds a

heroic dimension to the sculptor's presence and foreshadows a similar conception adopted by Rodin when he modelled his memorial statue of Balzac 20 years later. There is a fine distinction here between "expression" and caricature.²⁴

What is to be made of isolated drawings of heads, apparently without a context, that resemble each other? Maison catalogues, in his Volume II, 84 drawings of single male heads, 28 pairs, and 25 groups of three or more heads on a page. Women's heads are less frequent. In fact, resemblances are far less frequent than might be supposed, because one must distinguish between stylistic likeness—the superficial similarity that Alexandre noted—and physiognomic likeness, i.e., the representation of identical individuals. For example, there are studies both of single heads and of groups of a particular type of heavy-featured, side-whiskered bourgeois that Daumier observed in the front stalls of the Comédie Française: these all have a "family resemblance" which pertains both to their social class and to the fact that Daumier was drawing them from memory to put into his finished and therefore saleable watercolours on this theme. Their resemblance to each other is thus imparted by the drawing style, but within this convention the heads are given individual characters.

A different case is the head of a beggar leaning on his staff, who does appear as recognizably the same person in two sheets of drawings. He is the centre of the compositional group in each, but drawn full face in the one (Fig. 101) and in profile in the other.²⁵ Whether he is a creature of Daumier's invention or memory, he is plainly cast in a specific role. His downcast features were first adumbrated in black chalk, and then the eyelids, pinched nostrils, and thin drooping lips have been accented with strokes of the pen. On the left side of the drawing, two heads were suggested very sketchily in the chalk drawing stage, but their profiles have been clearly and strongly redrawn in ink. One of them might be a repeat of the beggar's face with his headscarf removed. No finished watercolour or oil is known to have evolved from this strange circle of heads. The subject of a beggar in a crowd would not have been a very saleable one treated like this, and the motif appears to belong with a group of drawings concerned with Dau-

22 Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, I (section II—18), 192, accepts the date of the conception of the Prague picture as 1848, but thinks that this head was painted later by Daumier, "probably 1855-6," the date which he also ascribes to the drawing. However, in II (cat. 31), 33, he observes that the drawing is laid down on board on the reverse of which is pasted part of the journal *L'Avant Garde*, which only appeared in 1848-49. I would accept this strong hint for dating it to 1848-49 on stylistic grounds as well.

23 Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 47-50. The profile that corresponds stylistically to the full-face portrait illustrated here is Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 49, also drawn in charcoal (Louvre, RF 35.386, Donation Claude Roger-Marx). Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 37, also refers to a fifth version which is untraced at present.

24 On some other occasions Daumier caricatured his friends: the engraver Trimolet, for example, who had a hatchet-like face and died in 1848, was drawn at least three times.

25 Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 170. The pendant drawing, in charcoal, is Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 169 (ex Roger-Marx Coll.). Other related drawings are Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 99—a beggar walking with a staff—and another sketch of the same in the Armand Hammer Collection, 1982 Catalogue no. 189 (illustrated).

mier's private preoccupations with what he observed. It is an expression of human misery.

One is constantly impelled to ask whether such images were drawn from immediate impressions or distilled from memories; in either case they look real. So far we have considered academic prototypes for Daumier's expressive heads, identifiable persons, and heads directly observed *dans les rues*. One might enquire whether any communal source or "reservoir" of expressions existed in Daumier's own time, *other than* the faces in the urban crowds among whom he continually strolled, or the inventions of his fellow cartoonists (he was not ashamed to borrow, and Monnier and Traviés were two friends whose work had some traits in common with his). Alexandre, it has already been noted, stressed the importance of the casts of Trajan's Column: "heads of warriors, of [Roman] citizens, of barbarians, so vigorously executed . . .".²⁶ Daumier's "expressive heads," however, are seldom classical in their proportions, although some of his lawyers have Roman noses.

There is another possible source of inspiration, geographically close to Daumier's daily visual experience but not hitherto mentioned: the 381 *mascarons* under the consoles of the Pont-Neuf. They are on the "wrong" side to be seen by people crossing the bridge, but are clearly visible from the quays that pass under the bridge on the Ile de la Cité and at either end by looking up from below. They are also visible, but more distantly (and therefore liable to be perceived in groups) by leaning over the balustrades of the pavements at right angles to the two arms of the bridge. These *mascarons* are supposedly "restorations" of an earlier series that had been inserted on the consoles under the cornice of the bridge soon after its completion in about 1605. They are clearly related to a very old tradition of the grotesque mask, as all commentators on the Pont-Neuf have noted²⁷; but the nineteenth-century masks are very free translations of the originals. Indeed, they could be considered as fresh creations in many cases, and some are so three-dimensionally conceived as "expressive heads" that the term *mascarons* taken literally

26 Alexandre, *Honoré Daumier*, 182 and 322. Daumier valued these casts enough to keep them through several changes of address during a lean period in 1863 (when he sold his furniture), and they ended up in the garden studio of his little house in Valmondois after he retired there.

27 There are a number of guidebooks and histories of Paris which refer to the *mascarons* in the context of the Pont-Neuf. The two volumes by François Boucher, *Le Pont-Neuf* (Paris: Goupy, 1925), remains the standard work on the bridge itself, and the archival material is mentioned (incompletely) by Stanislas Lami, *Dictionnaire des sculpteurs de L'École Française au dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris, 1914), I, 84, for Barye and others.

to mean "masks" is somewhat misleading. Their history deserves examination.

When the condition of the original *mascarons* was found to have deteriorated considerably by the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were two drives made for their "restoration": one between 1816 and 1820, and the other between 1852 and 1855.²⁸ The earlier drive was linked to the reconstruction of the *terre-plein* on the Ile de la Cité between the two arms of the bridge which, dominated by the equestrian statue of Henry IV, had overlooked the old triangular Place Dauphine.²⁹ This involved the destruction of the *mascarons* on three sides of its cornice, and the replacement of 66 *mascarons* on the consoles below it that faced out towards the river.³⁰ Similarly, in the second drive, all the *mascarons* on both sides of the long and the short arms of the bridge were replaced, the work here being divided among four sculptors: Etienne-Hippolyte Maindron, Hubert Lavigne, Fontenelle, and Daumier's friend Antoine Barye.³¹ A dozen of the original seventeenth-century *mascarons* are preserved in the Musée de Cluny. Damaged though they are by weathering, a fine degree of baroque fantasy can still be discerned (Fig. 102). Daumier would have seen them before their replacement and, I would suggest, admired them. However, his own translation of baroque idioms in his drawings and paintings is also related to nineteenth-century realism. Similarly, although the nineteenth-century replacements of the *mascarons* bear some relation to the originals, they are much more realistic in many cases. One might have expected to find some discussion of Barye's contribution—96 *mascarons* on the downstream side of the long arm of the bridge—in the literature on him, but until recently this has not been the case.³² Could this be

28 Boucher, *Le Pont-Neuf*, 65.

29 See Anthony Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France 1500-1700* (London, 1953), 14, and Fig. 11.

30 According to Boucher, *Le Pont-Neuf*, 65, the work was carried out by the sculptors J. A. Cagiola, François Milhomme, and Louis-Alexandre Romagnesi. However, the *Inventaire Général des Oeuvres d'Art de la Seine* (Paris, 1883), III, 232, simply lists under "1817" the sculptor Aimé Milhomme (1780-1822) as employed to make "mascarons représentant des têtes de faunes reproduits d'après les originaux de Germaine Pilon (sic)." The original *mascarons* are now attributed to an anonymous carver of the early seventeenth century.

31 Boucher, *Le Pont-Neuf*, 66. The four names are confirmed in the *Inventaire Général*, III, 232, which, however, includes a fifth name, Achille Joseph Etienne Valois. But the *Inventaire Général* does not specify the distribution of the work among these sculptors, whereas Boucher is very precise about the four whom he does name taking up the whole number of *mascarons*, so we must assume that he had access to better documentation.

32 Barye himself thought the commission important enough

because the decorative function of these *mascarons* was not accorded the seriousness of high art? If so, it would bring them down to the level of *popular art*: perhaps all the more interesting to Daumier for that reason.

In his recent and significant monograph on Barye, Glenn Benge has at last accorded full recognition to the *mascarons*, which he sees as the most imposing of Barye's late works, signifying a "fourth style" in the development of his sculpture with an almost neo-baroque character.³³ He also sees these masks as related directly to the muscular anatomy of the human head, and recognizes some as traditional personifications (Hercules and Silenus, for example), besides endless variations of demons and satyrs. Among possible sources, Benge suggests the grotesque masks on the keystones of the arched window heads on the façades of the old Louvre palace; the engravings after Le Brun's physiognomies; and Flaxman's engravings after Hesiod's *Theogony*.³⁴ Another link between the decorative convention of *mascarons* and the "expressive heads" is thus made. In the carvings by Barye and his compatriots there are varying degrees of transformation into more nineteenth-century modes of expression. An equivalent head from the 1817 "restoration" on the *terre-plein* appears less decoratively formalized than its seventeenth-century counterpart (Fig. 102) and more like a living person (Fig. 103).

All I intend to suggest is that the whole or any part of the Pont-Neuf *mascarons ensemble*—the work of Maindron, Lavigne, and Fontenelle as well as Barye in 1852-55, together with the earlier restorations of the 66 *mascarons* on the *terre-plein*—could constantly have presented itself before Daumier's eyes (as it does to all Parisians) as he strolled down the quais from the Palais de Justice in the direction of the Louvre and the rue St. Honoré. The liveliness and variety of these heads seems to reflect the stream of humans crossing the bridge, in a manner related to popular caricature. As several of Daumier's friends were sculptors, and he himself practised sculpture, it is entirely conceivable that the *mascarons* would have interested him.³⁵ There is also documentary evidence

to mention in a letter to the Académie des Beaux-Arts on 14 July 1866, when he was presenting himself as a candidate for the Institut de France with a "detailed recapitulation" of his works that included "Une partie des mascerons du Pont-Neuf." Roger Ballu, *L'Oeuvre de Barye* (Paris, 1890), 135.

33 Glenn Benge, *Antoine Barye, Sculptor of Romantic Realism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1984), 7, 49-51, and Figs. 32 and 33.

34 Benge, *Antoine Barye*, 46 and 50.

35 Daumier's sculptor friends, besides Barye, included Carrier-Belleuse as mentioned above, and Geoffroy Dechaume who cast his relief of *émigrants* in plaster.

to show that Barye was in close touch with Daumier in the 1850s on a personal level, so they can hardly have failed to discuss so unusual a commission.³⁶ Benge thinks that Barye's masks have the look of being based on clay models (though none now exists)—which would bring them closer to Daumier's own activities in sculpture.³⁷

It may even be possible to discover some generic similarities between the nineteenth-century *mascarons* and Daumier's drawings, though it is not suggested that he copied them. Daumier's elaborate and highly sculptural drawing of *Silenus* sent to the Salon of 1850-51 (Calais, Musée des Beaux-Arts), would have nearly coincided in time with Barye's *mascaron* of a Silenus head (Fig. 104).³⁸ Both can be recognized as relating to a generic "Silenus-type" traceable to the Renaissance. Although Barye's Silenus appears more stylized in the arabesques that form its features than Daumier's, it is far less gargoyle-like than, for example, the shell-head with open mouth in the Musée de Cluny which may be typical of those that inspired it (Fig. 105). The features of Barye's *mascaron* are still distorted into patterns to some extent, but he has produced an "expressive head" within the format of a grotesque mask.

In a not dissimilar manner the features of the central figure in Daumier's *La Chanson à Boire* (Fig. 106)³⁹ are also twisted into neo-baroque linear rhythms (sufficiently vigorous to induce the suggestion that we can "hear" the fat man's bellow) which produce an effect of vivid realism by this very stylization of form. Certain of Barye's *mascarons* are indeed reminiscent of the curious exaggerations of Le Brun's original *Têtes d'expression*, as in one head which sticks angrily out from under its console on a pier of the Pont-Neuf, eyes rolling heavenwards (Fig. 107). When Daumier drew a sketch of a tiny head looking upwards, its expression caught with vibrating curved lines and its solidity emphasized by strong shadows laid in with a brush, could he have been inspired by memory of such a head under a console of the Pont-Neuf, as much as by a person seen in the street (Fig. 108)? Given Daumier's known capacity for moving freely between graphic, painting, and sculptural media, there is a reasonable possibility of a synthe-

36 Evidence of the relationship among the families of Daumier, J. F. Millet, Alfred Sensier, Théodore Rousseau, and Antoine Barye, pertaining to accommodation in the village of Barbizon in the 1850s, is to be found in the Sensier-Millet correspondence preserved in the Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre.

37 Benge, *Antoine Barye*, 170.

38 Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 762. Benge, *Antoine Barye*, 170, specifies the date of execution of Barye's *mascarons* as ca. 1851.

39 Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 330.

sis of such sources having enabled him to pull this head into being.

Once free of the constraints of a fixed iconographical schema, Daumier's expressive heads can get together in unexpected relations, denoting—what? Self-recognition? There are pairs of male busts smiling at each other which look as though they had just achieved their own identity, liberated from the constraints of art and artifice.⁴⁰ Such heads seem as light-hearted as those on a page of studies by Hokusai, with the artist's own self-portrait in the centre (Fig. 109), which also appear to have a self-generated quality—to have come unpremeditated from the artist's pen. Allowing for the stylistic differences due to the *milieux* of the French and the Japanese (although it is quite possible that Daumier was aware of Hokusai's prints, at least by 1860), the similar spontaneity of gesture in the drawings of the two masters is remarkable (compare Daumier, Figs. 108 and 110). But no art is entirely self-generating, even given an invention as original as Daumier's. Something more urgent than the comic muse triggered off the expression of alarm in the moustached old man whose head is conjured up with the thin nib of a mapping pen rapidly churning out linear rhythms like a pulse: whether it was a political memory, or a compulsion to recreate the grotesque tradition into a modern drama, we shall never know (Fig. 110). Such late heads by Daumier have an even greater "family resemblance" in style than the lawyers, street singers, and theatre-goers of the period ca. 1850-65.

My final example, the *Head of a Man* (Fig. 111) in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts collection in Paris, is on

40 See Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 132 and 138, Plates 23 and 25.

the verso of a better-known drawing of Daumier's called *The Emigrants* (which may depict a column of prisoners under a mounted guard, and dates to the early 1850s).⁴¹ This head is much later than the political drawing on the other side, which had probably been used and discarded. Drawn in light black chalk, coloured with grey, pink, and ochre washes, and gone over again in heavier, greasy black crayon, it has been brought to completion with care. The number of overlapping images or iconographic connections that it could have passed through might include *Ratapail* (the sculpted figure of 1851, turned into a new state of alarm), Napoleon III (shortly before the outbreak of the Franco-Russian war of 1870), Don Quixote (in a state of doubt), and "The Artist in his Studio" (contemplating his own work), all of them implicit rather than explicit. It seems impossible to imagine a state of expression without a meaning, yet the most alarming feature about Daumier's "expressive heads"—which is what we are finally obliged to call such drawings—is that whatever their roots in the grotesque or pedagogic physiognomies, they contrive to look as though he *saw them* in these states and simply recorded them as they were. It has been the object of this article to show that Daumier's power to give this appearance of reality, even to that most intangible of subjects, the fleeting expression on a human face engaged in some private feeling, is likely to have been the result of an acquired artifice. His capacity to absorb and transmute a variety of sources is a measure of his creativity.

41 Maison, *Honoré Daumier Catalogue Raisonné*, II, 7 (verso) and 286 (recto).



FIGURE 94. Daumier, *Head of Guillaume Guizot*, ca. 1833. Bronze cast from clay, ht. 22.1 cm., the Armand Hammer Daumier Collection (Photo: Armand Hammer Foundation).



FIGURE 95. Daumier, *Tête d'expression*, ca. 1849-51. Brush and brown ink, 35 × 32.5 cm., London, British Museum (reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees).



FIGURE 96. Le Brun, "*Leffroy*" or *Terror*, ca. 1668. Brownish-grey chalk, 25 × 20 cm., Paris, Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins, Inv. No. 6497 (Cliché des Musées Nationaux, Paris).



FIGURE 97. Daumier, *Head of a man* (the historian Michelet?), ca. 1851. Sanguine, 23 × 30.2 cm., present location unknown (Photo: K. E. Maison).



FIGURE 98. Daumier, *Two heads of men*, 1840s(?). Black chalk, 16.7 × 15 cm., Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam (Photo: Boymans Museum).



FIGURE 99. Daumier, *Study of a Man's Head*, ca. 1848-59. Black chalk, charcoal, brush and wash, varnished, laid on board, 23 × 18 cm., private collection (Photo: K. E. Maison).

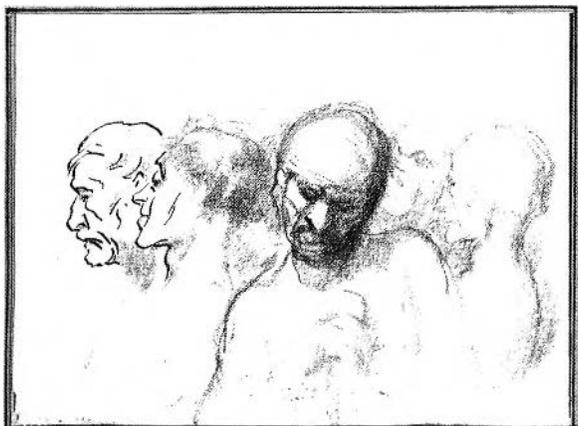


FIGURE 101. Daumier, *Study of a group of heads*, 1850s(?). Black chalk and pen, 13 × 17.7 cm., New York, Brooklyn Museum, Carll H. De Silver Fund (Photo: Brooklyn Central Museum).



FIGURE 106. Daumier, *La chanson à boire*, ca. 1860-65. Black chalk, pen and ink and watercolours, 26 × 34 cm., location unknown (Photo: Philadelphia Museum).



FIGURE 100. Daumier, *Portrait of Carrier-Belleuse*, 1863. Charcoal and stump, 43 × 28.5 cm., Paris, Petit Palais (Photo: Bulloz, Paris).



FIGURE 102. Anonymous French, *Mascaron (Jaun)*, ca. 1610. Paris, Musée de Cluny (formerly on the Pont-Neuf; Photo: N. D. Roger-Viollet, Paris).



FIGURE 103. François Milhomme(?), *Mascaron*, 1817. On *terre-plein* of the Pont-Neuf, Paris, 1817 (Photo: Author).



FIGURE 104. Antoine Barye, *Mascaron (Silenus)*, ca. 1851. Pont-Neuf, Paris (Photo: Author).



FIGURE 105. Anonymous French, *Mascaron*, ca. 1610. Paris, Musée de Cluny (formerly on the Pont-Neuf; Photo: Author).



FIGURE 107. Antoine Barye, *Mascaron*, ca. 1851. Paris, Pont-Neuf (Photo: Author).



FIGURE 108. Daumier, *Head of a man*, ca. 1870. Pen and wash, 10 × 11.5 cm., London, Mr. F. M. Gross (Photo: K. E. Maison).



FIGURE 109. Katsushika Hokusai. *Page of miscellaneous figures*, Edo period, ca. 1830. Black ink (brush) on paper, Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery (Photo: Author).



FIGURE 110. Daumier, *Head of a man*, ca. 1870. Pen and ink, 16.5 × 12 cm., Hartford, Conn., Wadsworth Atheneum (Photo: Courtesy Wadsworth Atheneum).



FIGURE 111. Daumier, *Head of a man*, ca. 1860-69. Black chalk and watercolour washes, 13.8 × 24 cm., Paris, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (Photo: Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts).