

The Spell of the Barricade: Art and Politics
in France, 1830-1852

By

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Abstract

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This dissertation is about barricades and image production in the 1830s and '40s. It comprises three chapters, each of which centers on a single work of art: Auguste Préault's *Tuerie* (1834), Ernest Meissonier's *Souvenir de guerre civile* (1849-1850), and Honoré Daumier's *L'Émeute* (c. 1848-1852). Together, the three chapters describe how the barricade oriented the period's multiple, often contradictory conceptions of class, revolution, history, and art. A new grammar of democratic politics took shape in the '30s and '40s, and it was one in which the street figured as both the site and medium of social transformation. Some would say, as I do, that the barricade was the 19th century's most poignant and meaningful "symbolic form." It was also the most enchanting.

Triumph is rare in these pages; tragedy sets their key. They turn on Préault's bas-relief, the political re-entrenchments of 1833-1834, horror, defeat, and disillusion rather than, say, the affirmative image of the barricade Eugène Delacroix's *La Liberté guidant le peuple* is often thought to have engendered; the uncertainties, ambivalences, and violence of artistic production in times of radical disintegration anchor their pivot. Not infrequently, they emphasize paintings, lithographs, and sculptures that evoke the barricade only in its absence. Yet while this dissertation reconfigures the image-map formerly in place, it does so not in pursuit of greater comprehensiveness – with the hope, as it were, of producing a total picture – but to capture something of the dividedness and fragmentariness that the barricade asserts even as it prefigures a world in which reconciliation is possible. Much was at stake in the '30s and '40s, and this dissertation aims to sharpen our sense of the true diversity and depth of the contemporary response, both to the limbo of the July Monarchy and the "dark times" (Brecht's phrase) after June 1848.

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INTRODUCTION

THE END OF HISTORY

Ne t'alarme pas de ton doute. Ce doute c'est déjà la foi. Crois, espère; le Droit ajourné aura son avènement, il viendra siéger, juger, dans le dogme et dans le monde...Et ce jour du Jugement s'appellera la Révolution.¹

– Jules Michelet, in *Bible de l'Humanité*, 1864.

The program of the aesthetically attempted anticipatory illumination is, How to make the world be made perfect without exploding the world and without letting it apocalyptically vanish.²

– Ernst Bloch, in “The Artistic Illusion as the Visible Anticipatory Illumination,” 1959.

This dissertation draws its title from a prefatory essay Friedrich Engels wrote for the first re-printing of Karl Marx’s *Class Struggles in France* in 1895. Published only months before his death in August of that year, the Introduction, which argues for a reorientation of revolutionary tactics around the franchise, reads on its surface like a “political testament,” as if in his final hour Engels indeed became, as Eduard Bernstein’s factious phrase alleges, a “sworn witness of reformist policy.”³ Taken simply as such, however, the Introduction loses its texture, as well as its contingent point of view. Engels’ proposal is present-centered: “I recommend these tactics,” he explains in a letter to Paul Lafargue, “only for the *Germany of the present time*, and that too *with essential reservations*. In France, Belgium, Italy and Austria it is impossible to follow this tactic in its entirety and in Germany it can become unsuitable tomorrow.”⁴ These are not the terms of Bernstein’s “revisionism,” or as Engels put it to Karl Kautsky, “legality *quand même*.”⁵ In order to reimagine the way forward, Engels turns his back to the future – not, as so many have thought, to the past.⁶

¹ Michelet, *Bible de l'Humanité* (Paris, 1864), p. 480.

² Bloch, “The Artistic Illusion as the Visible Anticipatory Illumination,” in *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), p. 146.

³ Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, ed. and trans. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 35; Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Ideas in Action*, trans. Joanna Hoornweg (London: Pluto Press, 1994), p. 63.

⁴ Engels’ letter, dated April 3, 1895, is reproduced in *Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850*, by Karl Marx (New York: International Publishers, 1997), p. 151.

⁵ Letter to Kautsky, April 1, 1895. Reproduced in *Class Struggles in France*, p. 151.

⁶ Early misreadings of Engels’ aims can be attributed to what he called the “disgraceful impression” that appeared in 1895, first in *Vorwärts* (March 30) and *Die Neue Zeit* (vol. 2, nos. 27-28) and then in the

The argument Engels advances begins with a confession: in 1848 he and Marx got the situation wrong. They had misjudged the state of economic development in Europe; subsequently, the “prospect” they had glimpsed of mass revolution – that is, the inevitable efflorescence of a vanguard minority into a revolutionary majority – proved to have been mere illusion, the transfixing radiance of a false horizon.⁷ “Everywhere,” Engels goes on to say, “the bourgeoisie had thrown in its lot with the governments, ‘culture and property’ had hailed and feasted the military moving against the insurrections. The spell of the barricade was broken; the soldier no longer saw behind it ‘the people,’ but rebels, agitators, plunderers, levelers, the scum of society.”⁸ The vigor of capitalist production, underestimated in 1848, was of the utmost consequence for the Marxian theory of revolution: henceforth “the people” would always appear divided; and with this, Engels concludes, “a powerful lever, so extraordinarily effective in 1848,” vanished.⁹ The street fight with barricades, “which up to 1848 gave everywhere the final decision,” had become impracticable.¹⁰ No longer did the barricade create a space of appearance, one which showed the world to be held in common; no longer did it *mediate*, put one side in contact – in the line of sight, in earshot – with the other. In short, the barricade lost its *political* valency, its ability, as it were, to present the social bases of contention as a *res publica*. 1848 demonstrated, instead, “how impossible it was...to win social reconstruction by a simple surprise attack.”¹¹ The most immediate task of the Revolution was therefore to engage in a “war of position” (Gramsci’s term) – “slow propaganda work and parliamentary activity.”¹² Armed struggle had to come later, only after the revolutionary forces cut through the passive attitude of the working-class majority and became, in turn, truly representative of the whole people; only then would it not be defeated by incoherence and untimeliness.¹³ History, as Engels saw it, had “completely transformed the conditions under which the proletariat had to fight.”¹⁴

“The spell of the barricade,” then, designates a chronology, the two decades between the Revolution of 1830 and the dissolution of the Second Republic on December 2, 1851. But this is not all it does. It speaks, as well, to a distinctive grammar of politics

second edition of Marx’s book. Prior to publication, any reference in the Introduction to future armed struggles was excised, apparently without Engels’ consent. The full version of the Introduction remained unpublished until the mid 1930s.

⁷ Engels, Introduction to *Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850*, by Karl Marx (New York: International Publishers, 1997), pp. 13-16.

⁸ Engels, Introduction, p. 23.

⁹ Engels, Introduction, p. 24.

¹⁰ Engels, Introduction, p. 21.

¹¹ Engels, Introduction, p. 16.

¹² Engels, Introduction, p. 26. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1978), esp. pp. 238-239.

¹³ This is the vital point omitted in 1895. The excised passage follows a discussion of how modern military technique and urban planning have rendered the conditions of revolt impossible for a divided “people”: “Does that mean that in the future the street fight will play no further role? Certainly not. It only means that the conditions since 1848 have become far more unfavorable for civil fights, far more favorable for the military. A future street fight can therefore only be victorious when this unfavorable situation is compensated by other factors. Accordingly, it will occur more seldom in the beginning of a great revolution than in its further progress, and will have to be undertaken with greater forces.” Introduction, pp. 24-25.

¹⁴ Engels, Introduction, p. 13.

and political expression, one in which the street figures as both the site and medium of social transformation. “La politique est dans la rue,” the Left used to say. It is a formidable slogan – not only because it grounds politics in social practice or imagines the possibility, as Marx, Lafargue, and Jules Guesde once said about the franchise, of transfiguring a means of deception into an instrument of emancipation, but because it insists that the question of the barricade is a question about representation.¹⁵ Victor Hugo, surely the period’s most astounding describer of the barricade, puts it this way in a series of *méditations* from the 1830s: “La rue de Paris joue toujours un grand rôle en révolution./Le mot terrible de la révolution de 1789, c’était la *lanterne*; le mot terrible de la révolution de 1830, c’était le *pavé*./Tous deux venaient de la rue.”¹⁶ Missing from the slogan of ‘68, however, is the orientation of Engels’ formulation toward the present, the sense of disenchantment even his few phrases about future street fights cannot entirely get away from – the “spell” was cast, as it were, both ways. His “revision” of revolutionary tactics rests on the irrevocability of the break. The point is not, of course, whether Engels gets the matter right, though I believe he does. One might quibble with his prescriptions either way. Of greater significance, it seems to me, is the tragic conception of the past crystallized in the sea-change: Engels here comes up against his own presage.

“Le plus excellent symbole du peuple,” Hugo writes just before the lines above, “c’est le pavé. On marche dessus jusqu’à ce qu’il vous tombe sur la tête.” Hugo seems to have been of two minds. The symbol – the *lanterne* in ‘89, the *pavé* in ‘30 – has its limits; it gathers victim and executioner together into itself. As such, it is *terrible*: surely Hugo means the resonance to be heard. The message, at any rate, is unambiguous: the legitimate violence of popular revolt cannot be separated from its opposite, *Terreur* and Sansculottism. These reflections prefigure Hugo’s dizzying account, in *Les Misérables*, of the enormous barricade raised by the Faubourg Saint-Antoine in June 1848 – “une levée cyclopéenne,” he calls it, confronting the “redoubtable” place de la Bastille:

De quoi était faite cette barricade? De l’écroulement de trois maisons à six étages, démolies exprès, disaient les uns. Du prodige de toutes les colères, disaient les autres. Elle avait l’aspect lamentable de toutes les constructions de la haine: la Ruine. On pouvait dire: qui a bâti cela? On pouvait dire aussi: qui a détruit cela? C’était l’improvisation du bouillonnement. Tiens! cette porte!

¹⁵ See the 1880 *Programme électoral des travailleurs socialistes*, published in *L’Égalité* on June 30. “Considérant,” the second paragraph of the co-authored preamble reads, “Que cette appropriation collective [des moyens de production] ne peut sortir que de l’action révolutionnaire de la classe productive – ou prolétariat – organisée en parti politique distinct;/Qu’une pareille organisation doit être poursuivie par tous les moyens dont dispose le prolétariat, y compris le suffrage universel, transformé ainsi d’instrument de duperie qu’il a été jusqu’ici en instrument d’émancipation.” Engels quotes the final line just before turning to the barricade (Introduction, p. 20).

¹⁶ Hugo, “Méditations philosophiques d’un arrière-petit-fils de gringoire sur les pavés de Paris,” in *Journal 1830-1848*, ed. Henri Guillemin (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), p. 345.

cette grille! cet auvent! ce chambranle! ce réchaud brisé!
 cette marmite fêlée! Donnez tout! jetez tout! poussez,
 roulez, piochez, démantelez, bouleversez, écroulez tout!
 C'était la collaboration du pavé, du moellon, de la poutre,
 de la barre de fer, du chiffon, du carreau défoncé, de la
 chaise dépaillée, du trognon de chou, de la loque, de la
 guenille, et de la malédiction. C'était grand et c'était petit.
 C'était l'abîme parodié sur place par le tohu-bohu. La
 masse près de l'atome; le pan de mur arraché et l'écuelle
 cassée; une fraternisation menaçante de tous les débris;
 Sisyphe avait jeté là son rocher et Job son tesson. En
 somme, terrible. C'était l'acropole des va-nu-pieds... Cet
 amas gigantesque, alluvion de l'émeute, figurait à l'esprit un
 Ossa sur Pélion de toutes les révolutions; 93 sur 89, le 9
 thermidor sur le 10 août, le 18 brumaire sur le 21 janvier,
 vendémiaire sur prairial, 1848 sur 1830. La place en valait
 la peine, et cette barricade était digne d'apparaître à
 l'endroit même où la Bastille avait disparu. Si l'océan
 faisait des digues, c'est ainsi qu'il les bâtirait. La furie du
 flot était empreinte sur cet encombrement difforme. Quel
 flot? la foule. On croyait voir du vacarme pétrifié. On
 croyait entendre bourdonner, au-dessus de cette barricade,
 comme si elles eussent été là sur leur ruche, les énormes
 abeilles ténébreuses du progrès violent. Était-ce une
 broussaille? était-ce une bacchanale? était-ce une
 forteresse? Le vertige semblait avoir construit cela à coups
 d'aile. Il y avait du cloaque dans cette redoute et quelque
 chose d'olympien dans ce fouillis. On y voyait, dans un
 pêle-mêle plein de désespoir, des chevrons de toits, des
 morceaux de mansardes avec leur papier peint, des châssis
 de fenêtres avec toutes leurs vitres plantés dans les
 décombres, attendant le canon, des cheminées descellées,
 des armoires, des tables, des bancs, un sens dessus dessous
 hurlant, et ces mille choses indigentes, rebuts même du
 mendiant, qui contiennent à la fois de la fureur et du néant.
 On eût dit que c'était le haillon d'un peuple, haillon de bois,
 de fer, de bronze, de pierre, et que le faubourg Saint-
 Antoine l'avait poussé là à sa porte d'un colossal coup de
 balai, faisant de sa misère sa barricade. Des blocs pareils à
 des billots, des chaînes disloquées, des charpentes à
 tasseaux ayant forme de potences, des roues horizontales
 sortant des décombres, amalgamaient à cet édifice de
 l'anarchie la sombre figure des vieux supplices soufferts par
 le peuple. La barricade Saint-Antoine faisait arme de tout;
 tout ce que la guerre civile peut jeter à la tête de la société
 sortait de là; ce n'était pas du combat, c'était du paroxysme;

les carabines qui défendaient cette redoute, parmi lesquelles il y avait quelques espingoles, envoyaient des miettes de faïence, des osselets, des boutons d'habit, jusqu'à des roulettes de tables de nuit, projectiles dangereux à cause du cuivre. Cette barricade était forcenée; elle jetait dans les nuées une clameur inexprimable; à de certains moments, provoquant l'armée, elle se couvrait de foule et de tempête, une cohue de têtes flamboyantes la couronnait; un fourmillement l'emplissait; elle avait une crête épineuse de fusils, de sabres, de bâtons, de haches, de piques et de bayonnettes; un vaste drapeau rouge y claquait dans le vent; on y entendait les cris du commandement, les chansons d'attaque, des roulements de tambours, des sanglots de femmes, et l'éclat de rire ténébreux des meurtre-de-faim. Elle était démesurée et vivante; et, comme du dos d'une bête électrique, il en sortait un pétilllement de foudres. L'esprit de révolution couvrait de son nuage ce sommet où grondait cette voix du peuple qui ressemble à la voix de Dieu; une majesté étrange se dégageait de cette titanique hottée de gravats. C'était un tas d'ordures et c'était le Sinai.¹⁷

Incomprehension here replaces caution. Hugo searches for but cannot find the criteria of judgment that allowed him, three decades earlier, to secure the link between the barricade and “the people.” The identity fragments; “the people,” like the barricade, becomes heterogeneous; it refuses to be pulled into a single ideological space, one totalizing image. The catalogue of supplies repeats at almost regular intervals, as if Hugo, with each recursion, hoped to start afresh; the metaphor splits and multiplies, mirroring its object, never quite managing to coax the unifying image into existence. The *pavé* of 1830 has become intractable, a composite of rubble and refuse, disabused symbols and ideals. And *malédiction*: the barricade takes on the terrible aspect of “une gueule.”¹⁸ This is working-class Paris, a people but not *the* people, representing itself – “le travail réclamant ses droits.”¹⁹ It sings the *Carmagnole* in defiance of the *Marseillaise*. Its *mot d'ordre* is “le hasard, le désordre, l'effarement, le malentendu, l'inconnu.”²⁰

The Saint-Antoine barricade, as Stefan Jonsson suggests, appears in *Les Misérables* as a “monument to Western modernity,” a world without unifying images – in short, an allegory of the history of France.²¹ The status of this barricade as allegory reveals its true force, however, only when it is set next to its counterpart in the Faubourg du Temple. Too often does this other barricade get overlooked in the critical literature; it

¹⁷ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, vol. 9 (Paris, 1862), pp. 9-13.

¹⁸ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, p. 18.

¹⁹ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, p. 8.

²⁰ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, p. 13.

²¹ Jonsson, *A Brief History of the Masses: Three Revolutions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 48-50. My account of the Saint-Antoine barricade is deeply indebted to Jonsson's, with which I almost entirely agree. I have read none more sensitive to the confounding spectacle of Hugo's depiction than his.

does not quite match up with our romantic image of June. Yet it is, Hugo says, no less marvellous, “une muraille étrange atteignant au deuxième étage des façades, sorte de trait d'union des maisons de droite aux maisons de gauche, comme si la rue avait replié d'elle-même son plus haut mur pour se fermer brusquement.” “Ce mur,” he continues,

était bâti avec des pavés. Il était droit, correct, froid, perpendiculaire, nivelé à l'équerre, tiré au cordeau, aligné au fil à plomb. Le ciment y manquait sans doute, mais comme à de certains murs romains, sans troubler sa rigide architecture. À sa hauteur on devinait sa profondeur. L'entablement était mathématiquement parallèle au soubassement. On distinguait d'espace en espace, sur sa surface grise, des meurtrières presque invisibles qui ressemblaient à des fils noirs. Ces meurtrières étaient séparées les unes des autres par des intervalles égaux. La rue était déserte à perte de vue. Toutes les fenêtres et toutes les portes fermées. Au fond se dressait ce barrage qui faisait de la rue un cul-de-sac; mur immobile et tranquille; on n'y voyait personne, on n'y entendait rien; pas un cri, pas un bruit, pas un souffle. Un sépulcre.²²

Unlike the “bête fauve” of Saint-Antoine, which erupts in a “tumulte des tonnerres,” the Temple barricade expresses nothing;²³ it is impassible and inscrutable, a death mask without the distinctive marks of the individual. The stillness and silence it enforces determine the conditions of survival. To approach it is to perish: “on regardait cela et l'on parlait bas.”²⁴ Only by breaking through neighboring houses and clambering over roofs will colonel Monteynard’s troops eventually take this “redoute lugubre...d’où la mort sortait.”²⁵ The Temple barricade is Auguste Blanqui’s barricade, “sinistre” rather than “formidable”;²⁶ it consists of nothing but *pavés* expertly assembled; everything appears in place. The Temple barricade holds itself together; it is ideal, almost ineffable, an “apparition mystérieuse.” “On sentait que le chef de cette barricade était un géomètre ou un spectre.”²⁷ Mesmerized by its perfect, abstract form – its classicism – Hugo cannot see through to its content; their unity becomes, in effect, this barricade’s deadliness: “c’était ajusté, emboîté, imbriqué, rectiligne, symétrique, et funèbre.”²⁸ The Temple barricade confronts Hugo, as it were, with a symbol, whose operability depends on its negation as such. It must not signify, it must not represent.

Hugo’s account of the June barricades constitutes one of several historical digressions that interrupt the narrative of *Les Misérables*. Its futurity, however, is

²² Hugo, *Les Misérables*, pp. 14-15.

²³ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, p. 18.

²⁴ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, p. 16.

²⁵ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, p. 17.

²⁶ See, in particular, Blanqui’s *Instructions pour une prise d’armes* (c. 1868), in which he seeks to reclaim the barricade for tactical purposes (Blanqui, *Instructions pour une prise d’armes*, in *Maintenant, il faut des armes*, ed. Dominique Le Nuz (Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2006), pp. 257-292).

²⁷ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, p. 16.

²⁸ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, p. 16.

exceptional; it does not, like the passages on the Battle of Waterloo or the Paris sewers, link past to present. 1848 has no logical place within the novel's temporal structure, which culminates with the barricade in the rue de la Chanvrerie and the abortive insurrection of June 1832. The pages on 1848, which introduce the final act, are historical, then, insofar as they are anticipatory. The Chanvrerie barricade, in turn, takes on the properties of historical immanence, becoming as it were a kind of ur-form – an “ébauche” and “embryon” of the two “colosses” Hugo has just finished describing.²⁹ The future lives in the novel's present. Just listen to Enjolras' exhortations at the end of the chapter aptly titled “Quel horizon on voit du haut de la barricade”:

Ô mes frères, c'est ici le lieu de jonction de ceux qui pensent et de ceux qui souffrent; cette barricade n'est faite ni de pavés, ni de poutres, ni de ferrailles; elle est faite de deux monceaux, un monceau d'idées et un monceau de douleurs. La misère y rencontre l'idéal. Le jour y embrasse la nuit et lui dit: Je vais mourir avec toi et tu vas renaître avec moi. De l'étreinte de toutes les désolations jaillit la foi. Les souffrances apportent ici leur agonie, et les idées leur immortalité. Cette agonie et cette immortalité vont se mêler et composer notre mort. Frères, qui meurt ici meurt dans le rayonnement de l'avenir, et nous entrons dans une tombe toute pénétrée d'aurore.³⁰

The men of 1848, Hugo says, were wiser than those of 1832.

De 1832 à 1833, il nous vint à l'esprit que le romantisme pouvait être un système de philosophie et d'économie politique. En effet, les écrivains affectaient alors dans leurs préfaces (que nous n'avons jamais cessé de lire avant tout, comme le plus important) de parler de l'avenir, du progrès social, de l'humanité et de la civilisation; mais nous avons pensé que c'était la révolution de juillet qui était cause de cette mode, et d'ailleurs, il n'est pas possible de croire qu'il soit nouveau d'être républicain.³¹
– Alfred de Musset, in *Lettres de Dupuis et Cottonet au directeur de la Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 1836.

²⁹ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, p. 21.

³⁰ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, p. 56.

³¹ Musset, *Contes* (Paris, 1865), pp. 290-291.

In 1830, barricade-building was already an established practice. The first *journée des barricades* took place on May 12, 1588, the second during the early stages of the Fronde, on August 27-28, 1648. The great Revolution built barricades, too; and on November 19, 1827, they lined the rue Saint-Denis. At least two dozen other barricade events occurred in between.³² None of them, however, left a visual record of the barricade;³³ no one class or *état* claimed the barricade as its own, or for another – Parisian sans-culottes built barricades on 1 Prairial III, the Royalists of the rue Saint-Honoré on 13 Vendémiaire III. It is not without reason, then, that many have considered “the barricade” a 19th-century phenomenon, one whose actualization coincided with the Revolution of 1830. The designation seems right to me, although “symbolic form,” which realizes the double capacity of the barricade as object of knowledge and object of reflection, offers a more precise mediating concept. At least it pulls “phenomenon” into a different kind of focus, even, I might suggest, out of focus; it gives back to “phenomenon” its negative valency, an emphasis on the apparent. That is to say, it provides a way for us to recognize “the barricade” as a figure constitutive of and constituting the syntax of Revolution in the 19th century – a representation, an orienting image. It permits “the barricade,” as it always was in the 1830s and ‘40s, to remain in dispute.

The July Revolution, in any event, invented the barricade’s first imagery; and some, like Félix Philippoteaux, quickly recast it in the costume of the 17th or 18th century. In return, the barricade offered the first myth of revolution – “the self-made man’s idea,” as T. J. Clark inimitably puts it, “that the Nation, now, was self-made” – a stage capable of representing it.³⁴ Only we have to modify Clark’s language if we are truly to capture the allure of the barricade in 1830, re-write his “self-made man” in the plural, preserving, all the while, the semblance of unity that the phrase so incisively brings to a point. In July, the bourgeois was as much a revolutionary as the worker, artisan, and *gamin*; he put on his shako for the occasion. And for a while he stood arm in arm with the worker on the barricade, property they held in common: “Eh bien oui...! Charbonnier est maître chez lui” (fig. 1). Few if any believed in the myth or expressed it with greater conviction and eloquence than Jules Michelet, who, in 1831, linked the July barricades to the dissolution of differences among men – that is, to the birth of a “people”:

Ce que la révolution de juillet offre de singulier, c’est de présenter le premier modèle d’une révolution sans héros, sans noms propres; point d’individu en qui la gloire ait pu se localiser. La société a tout fait. La révolution du quatorzième siècle s’expia et se résuma dans la Pucelle

³² On the long history of the barricade, see Mark Traugott, *The Insurgent Barricade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), which includes a comprehensive database of barricade events in Europe. See also the collection of essays in Alain Corbin and Jean-Marie Mayeur (eds.), *La Barricade* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997).

³³ Only a single picture of the barricade, at least that I know of, survives from any of them, an engraving of 1648 which shows us a row of *barriques*, reinforcements for the chain stretched before them, prohibiting passage through the Porte Saint-Antoine.

³⁴ Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 17.

d'Orléans, pure et touchante victime qui représenta le peuple et mourut pour lui. Ici pas un nom propre; personne n'a préparé, n'a conduit; personne n'a éclipsé les autres. Après la victoire, on a cherché le héros; et l'on a trouvé tout un peuple.³⁵

History in its present form, which Michelet identified with the eternal struggle of “l'homme contre la nature, de l'esprit contre la matière, de la liberté contre la fatalité,” had reached its point of resolution.³⁶ Or so Michelet believed at the time, certain that among the ruins of these shattered barriers, these centuries-old structures of bondage repressing man's natural impulse toward fraternity, he glimpsed the “génie social” of France and thus the presentiment of humanity's full realization.³⁷ Namelessness for Michelet had nothing to do with the non-signifying, flattening sameness of anonymity: “the people” was a truly social being precisely because it was not a social category, because its emergence, which announced the triumph of the Nation over individualism, nullified social categories altogether. Everyone was *peuple*, Michelet insisted. What he considered the uniqueness of 1830, then, pertained to the whole, not the individual parts that constituted it; for these parts, individual merely in appearance, derived their significance from their status as symbols of the unity they were striving to become.³⁸

“Je crois au repos de l'avenir”:³⁹ for Michelet, the barricade exemplified freedom, which, as he conceived it, had two aspects: it was, at once, a freedom from determination and a freedom to create associations, that is, to transform the diffuse and scattered, by assimilation, into a unity, many and one at the same time.⁴⁰ The barricade, then, made it possible for “the people” to recognize itself as such, to act as such. Hugo expressed it this way on the anniversary of the *journée du 10 août*: “Hier vous n'étiez qu'une foule:/Vous êtes un peuple aujourd'hui!”⁴¹ Such allusions to the radicalism of the Year I and II were commonplace, and the invocation almost always turns, as it does in Hugo, on the moderation and good-will embraced by the revolutionaries of 1830. The July Days were “glorious” – this is the implication – because the illumination of Reason subdued the “sourire effrayant” of vengeance, molding the disorder and incoherence of battle – the impetuous *foule* – into an “être intelligente,” an “âme commune,” in short, a politics.⁴²

³⁵ Michelet, *Introduction à l'histoire universelle* (Paris, 1843), p. 98.

³⁶ Michelet, *Introduction à l'histoire universelle*, p. 9.

³⁷ For Michelet, the “instinct social” characteristic of the French nation marks its difference from England and thus signals its advanced state of historical development: “Dans l'Angleterre, dominé par l'élément germanique et féodal, triomphent le vieil héroïsme barbare, l'aristocratie, la liberté par privilège. La liberté sans l'égalité, la liberté injuste et impie n'est autre chose que l'insociabilité dans la société même. La France veut la liberté dans l'égalité, ce qui est précisément le génie social.” *Introduction à l'histoire universelle*, p. 92.

³⁸ I owe the point, and much of the phrasing, to Hayden White; mine is a specific instance of his general conclusion. See White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in the Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 150.

³⁹ Michelet, *Introduction à l'histoire universelle*, p. 99.

⁴⁰ See David Carroll, “The Art of the People: Aesthetic Transcendence and National Identity in Jules Michelet,” *boundary 2* (Spring 1998): esp. pp. 123-124.

⁴¹ Hugo, “Dicté après juillet 1830,” in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 5 (*Les Chants du crépuscule*) (Paris, 1835), p. 12.

⁴² The quoted phrases are Hugo's (“Dicté après juillet 1830,” p. 11).

The legitimacy of the July Revolution had to be seen to reside, that is to say, not in the revival or fulfillment of 1789 – the path from *le 10 août* to the execution of Louis XVI and the Law of Suspects was one-way – but in its correction of 1789. And this work of revision, as the title of one pamphlet declared in no uncertain terms, was the work of “the people”: *La Révolution de 89 et 93, seconde édition revue et corrigée par le peuple en 1830*.⁴³

Of course revisionist statements such as this have only a partial relation to Michelet’s redemptive vision; and I have little doubt that Michelet would have found political constructions of “the people” – atomistic, an aggregate of individuals bound by a *volonté collective* rather than a predisposition toward *sociabilité* – dangerously contradictory, no less so, indeed, than he found the principle of class struggle. Michelet’s “people” did not have enemies. It is what the two accounts share, nevertheless, that reveals the aporetic quality of Michelet’s Utopia. In his effort to wrest “the people” away from the ideologists, Michelet could not entirely avoid becoming one himself; for his constitutive idea of the Nation prefigured kinds of social experience and practice, an identity among the classes – that there was a way they belonged together and had interests in common – which did not exist in their everyday life. The July barricades presented Michelet with a “wish-image,” yet it was one in which he attempted merely to transcend (not illumine) the incompleteness of the (social) order of production.⁴⁴ It was an image, itself paradoxically partial, he would hold fast until the “affreuse nuit du 24 juin” confronted him with a future he no longer recognized as his own, a future, that is, for which he could not write.⁴⁵ Riven by a cruel violence, “the people” emerged from the catastrophe of 1848 wounded and bleeding. History lay in ruins.

⁴³ Nathalie Jakobowicz brought this pamphlet to my attention. See her *1830, le Peuple de Paris: révolution et représentations sociales* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009), p. 193.

⁴⁴ Walter Benjamin begins his description of the wish-image with a quotation from Michelet: “chaque époque rêve la suivante.” From there he goes on to write: “Corresponding to the form of the new means of production, which in the beginning is still ruled by the form of the old (Marx), are images in the collective consciousness in which the new is premeated with the old. These images are wish images; in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production. At the same time, what emerges in these wish images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated – which includes, however, the recent past. These tendencies deflect the imagination (which is given impetus by the new) back upon the primal past. In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history – that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society – as stored in the unconscious of the collective – engender, through interpenetration with what is new, the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions.” Benjamin, “Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century <Exposé of 1935>,” in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002), pp. 4-5.

⁴⁵ “J’essayai de tirer de moi un livre populaire et ne pus,” Michelet noted in a journal entry of March 27, 1849. “Je retournerai, humilié, triste et sombre, au travail impersonnel de mes récits historiques.” Michelet, *Journal. Tome II (1849-1860)*, ed. Paul Viallaneix (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 23.

Michelet's "people" stands between History and Myth. For even as "the people" realizes its identity in and through the Revolution, only the intervention of a third figure, he later wrote, can realize its potential:⁴⁶

Le peuple, en sa plus haute idée, se trouve difficilement dans le peuple. Que je l'observe ici ou là, ce n'est pas lui, c'est telle classe, telle forme partielle du peuple, altérée et éphémère. Il n'est dans sa vérité, à sa plus haute puissance, que dans l'homme de génie; en lui réside la grande âme... Tout le monde s'étonne de voir les masses inertes vibrer au moindre mot qu'il dit, les bruits de l'Océan se taire devant cette voix, la vague populaire traîner à ses pieds... Pourquoi donc s'en étonner? Cette voix, c'est celle du peuple; muet en lui-même, il parle en cet homme, et Dieu avec lui. C'est là vraiment qu'on peut dire: 'Vox populi, vox Dei.'⁴⁷

The *homme de génie* presents a paradox: "il est," Michelet maintains, "le peuple plus que n'est le peuple même."⁴⁸ He appears as a stand-in, of course, for Michelet himself, who takes it as his task – indeed, the very purpose of writing history – not to represent "the people" but to *resurrect* it, not, that is, to speak *for* "the people" but *as* it.⁴⁹ Performing this task meant above all for Michelet recalling the forgotten, "celui qui compte pour rien en Europe";⁵⁰ it meant summoning into visibility that part of "the people" that does not speak: "Michelet invente l'art de faire parler les pauvres en les faisant taire, de les faire parler comme muets."⁵¹ The *homme de génie* mediates. His gift is the gift of actualization.

Michelet insists, nevertheless, on the historical coherence and consistency of the *patrie*: "on ne peut opposer rigoureusement la bourgeoisie au peuple, comme font quelques-uns, ce qui n'irait pas à moins qu'à créer deux nations."⁵² It made no sense to him to speak, as Daniel Stern would after June 1848, of "une nation dans la nation."⁵³ Too eager to delimit its position in society as a discrete class, to see in itself as it were the new aristocracy – post-Revolutionary society, Michelet believed, comprised two classes, the people and the bourgeoisie, as opposed to the *ancien régime*'s three – the modern bourgeoisie prefigured its own dissolution, for in abjuring its true essence as part of the people it declared itself against History. Thus emptied of purpose, driven by fearfulness

⁴⁶ Bettina R. Lerner, "Michelet, Mythologue," *Yale French Studies* 111 (2007): p. 67.

⁴⁷ Michelet, *Le Peuple* (Paris, 1866), p. 199.

⁴⁸ Michelet, *Le Peuple*, p. 198.

⁴⁹ "Que ce soit là ma part dans l'avenir, d'avoir non pas atteint, mais marqué le but de l'histoire, de l'avoir nommée d'un nom que personne n'avait dit. Thierry l'appelait *narration*, et M. Guizot *analyse*. Je l'ai nommée *résurrection*, et ce nom lui restera." *Le Peuple*, p. xxxv.

⁵⁰ Michelet, *Le Peuple*, p. 100.

⁵¹ Jacques Rancière, *Les Noms de l'histoire: Essai de poétique du savoir* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), p. 96.

⁵² Michelet, *Le Peuple*, p. 102. On Michelet and the bourgeoisie, see Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 176-179.

⁵³ Stern, *Histoire de la révolution de 1848*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1862), p. 7.

rather than ideals, guarding only its isolation, the bourgeoisie necessarily existed in a state of paralysis; as a “classe à part,” it remained “incapable d’action.”⁵⁴ That was the trouble with the conciliatory language the bourgeoisie – the nascent July Monarchy as much as the liberal press – adopted in 1830. If the Revolution really was shared, if the new definition of man it engendered really had the valency of a universal, if “the people,” in short, truly embodied the Nation, the image the bourgeoisie circulated of itself crumbled. The bourgeois would no longer be able to deny his past; he would no longer be able to conceal his partiality with the misdirections of Right. “Les bourgeois résistèrent en invoquant la légalité,” *L’Artisan* snarled, “les ouvriers, eux, s’armèrent, en invoquant la liberté.”⁵⁵ The margins of ideology can be patrolled only at the risk of revealing its limits and discrepancies.

That the Revolution’s lithographers made little effort to mask the contours of class difference is therefore hardly surprising.⁵⁶ Indeed, they sharpen those differences, give class an imagery of its own. The *ouvrier* represents “the people” in 1830. Yet the identity remains incomplete; it leaves room for the real substance of the historical situation in 1830, but it abstracts that substance, imagines the contradictions it makes visible resolved. The *ouvrier-peuple* of 1830 chooses Reason voluntarily. He is, as it were, an *homme du peuple*, neither ugly nor beautiful. Like the National Guard and the *polytechnicien*, he appears in uniform: *blouse* or *chemise blanche* with *carmagnole*, sleeves rolled up to reveal a muscular forearm, collar open to reveal a powerful breast, pants torn at the knee, a *casquette*. Sometimes his smock is replaced by castoffs from the local garrison, ragged and piecemeal, but worn with dignity and pride. In general, he stands at center, usually behind the barricade, occasionally on the barricade; in a few instances, he builds a barricade. Whatever the scenario, the barricade, often no more than a small pile of *pavés* interspersed with spars of wood, almost never provides him with cover; it operates neither as a roadblock nor as an entrenchment. The *ouvrier* does the lion’s share of the fighting; but he never turns swinish, criminal, “dangerous.” He is essentially good; the violence he must exercise is tempered by his benevolence. Should he be offered a *verre*, he insists that it be cut (*Seulement de l’eau rougie, la petite mère*) (fig. 2); he does not steal; he fires pragmatically (*Tirez sur les chefs et les chevaux. Jeune gens...f.ttez vous du reste*) (fig. 3); when his adversaries are defenseless, he protects them from the mob (figs. 4). The thought of overstepping, in short, does not occur to him; he accepts the place allotted to him; the words he speaks are crude but quaint, often humorous, a *patois* that is, nevertheless, not his own (*Eh ben, as tu touché Jean Louis? Ah dam j’scais pas...ma foi j’ai tiré dans l’tas*) (fig. 5). In a word, his goals remain modest; he fights for a constitution (fig. 6). After the battle, he will lay down his weapons and return to the workshop. He is Hugo’s *peuple* rather than *L’Artisan*’s. Hippolyte Bellangé serves as his chief representative. Only once or twice – in Honoré Daumier’s *L’Épicier* (fig. 7) and Nicolas-Toussaint Charlet’s *L’Allocution* (fig. 8) – do his intentions seem uncertain; the heap of *pavés*, in such instances, becomes a solid wall, one stretching top to bottom and cutting the picture in two, behind which the *insurgé*

⁵⁴ Michelet, *Le Peuple*, pp. 101-102.

⁵⁵ *L’Artisan*, October 10, 1830.

⁵⁶ See Alain Pauquet, “Les représentations de la barricade dans l’iconographie de 1830 à 1848,” in *La Barricade*, eds. Alain Corbin and Jean-Marie Mayeur (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997), esp. pp. 100-103; 106-107.

readies his next move. The graffito on Charlet's wall reads: "Au bon coin/a mort pour la Patrie."

Almost as a rule, painters took their lead from the *imprimeries*, repeating or adapting the forms of the lithographers whose prints had been flooding the streets of Paris for months. Nearly 50 pictures of the July barricades were shown at the Salon of 1831. The Government had instructed the jury to accept any painting dealing with the July Days, and for the most part the jury complied.⁵⁷ Two small paintings by Philippe-Auguste Jeanron, an unknown at the time, were nevertheless rejected; neither of them have survived. We are told that the first, *1830*, depicted an *ouvrier* wounded on a barricade, and that the second, *1831*, showed the same man dying in his garret, "moins de suites de sa blessure," Victor Schoelcher adds, "que de la plus affreuse misère."⁵⁸ Not only had Jeanron violated the terms of the official mythology, revealing them to be ahistorical; he re-imagined the *trait d'héroïsme* as tragedy. Together, the two pictures raised the social question; therefore, they had to go. The future, if it was to be figured at all, needed to look something more like Jeanron's third entry, *Les Petits patriotes* (fig. 9), whose smoking, pensive rascals, decked out in gendarme's bicorne and lancer's shako, "jouant avec une gravité charmante aux soldats de juillet," seemed rather at ease with their "petite dimension historique."⁵⁹ One of them, after all, has tuckered out. Critics found Jeanron's masquerading *enfants* delightful. They did not detect in the question of youth a question about whom the future was for. The barricade they saw had the character of a lookout, its *chef*, standing straight, peering beyond the picture rather than into it – rather, that is, than at the wreckage and death that come even with victory – the air of a *sentinelle* on "le lendemain de la bataille."⁶⁰

That is the reason, I suspect, critics often compared *Les Petits patriotes* to Eugène Delacroix's *Le 28 juillet 1830: la Liberté guidant le peuple* (fig. 10) – the most admired and the most reviled of barricade pictures at the Salon – and why the comparison turns, where it appears, on perspective.⁶¹ Partly the matter was technical, to be sure; neither picture puts the world in order. But the critics who raise the issue – Gustave Planche, Barthélémy Hauréau, Schoelcher, all of them friends and allies, all of them favorably disposed – seem much less concerned with griping about faulty drawing than the way Jeanron and Delacroix bring the Revolution up close, and how the disproportion of foreground and middle-ground – the *enfants* and the cleaning-crew, the crowd around Liberty and the one behind – amplifies the effect.⁶² In general, the Revolution, fitted to the format of a

⁵⁷ Madeleine Rousseau, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Philippe-Auguste Jeanron: peintre, écrivain, directeur des musées nationaux, 1808-1877* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées nationaux, 2000), p. 226.

⁵⁸ Schoelcher, *L'Artiste* vol. 1 (1831): p. 228.

⁵⁹ The first quoted phrase comes from Schoelcher, the second from Ambroise Tardieu (*Annales du Musée et de l'école moderne des beaux-arts. Salon de 1831* (Paris, 1831), p. 224).

⁶⁰ Barthélémy Hauréau, "Coup d'oeil cynique sur l'exposition," *Le Mercure du dix-neuvième siècle* vol. 33 (1831): p. 482.

⁶¹ The classic account of *Liberté's* critical reception and the ideological conflict staged in and around the picture is, of course, Nicos Hadjinicolaou's "'La Liberté guidant le peuple' de Delacroix devant son premier public," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* (June 1979): pp. 3-26. See also Michael Marrinan, *Painting Politics for Louis-Philippe: Art and Ideology in Orleanist France, 1830-1848* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 67-76.

⁶² Here, for instance, is Planche: "Par une singulière coïncidence, le fond du tableau de M. Jeanron n'est pas mieux perspectivé que celui d'Eugène Delacroix, les acteurs du dernier plan sont, par leur dimension, très éloignés du spectateur; mais cet éloignement est violent, et la disposition des lignes s'y oppose; il semble

battle scene, happens at a distance; either that, or it moves into the picture space (figs. 11-12). We watch; history turns its back toward us. Jeanron, conversely, has one of his *petits patriotes* stare us down; he angles the wooden spar of their barricade such that it appears to transgress the picture plane, its flat, moreover, red with blood. Our distance from this barricade is measured by the width of a single *pavé*. Should we attempt to enter Jeanron's picture, move past the spar and the stage-like barricade it supports, we quickly come up against the sharpened corner of an imposing building, a solid block of stone unbroken by doors or windows.

Delacroix directs the charge Liberty leads toward us, cropping the picture at top, left, and right to let us know how much time we have to get out of the way. He fills the painting's shallow foreground with corpses: a worker, nearly entirely naked except for his *chemise* and a single blue sock; a National Guard, his uniform splayed open, one boot missing; a *cuirassier*, his body severed by the painting's right edge. We are made to look into the hollow, black depth of the *cuirassier*'s shako, whose nearness is shared only by lifeless hands and feet – *Liberté* is, so to speak, Géricault's *Radeau de la Méduse* (fig. 13) rotated 180 degrees, the latter's catamaran transfigured in the barricade, the *sénégalais* crowning its far end transformed into Jeanne Marie, the surging, wall-like wave that threatens to capsize the makeshift vessel vaporized and diffused, the smoke of gunfire at the moment of victory. Delacroix, as it were, disintegrates Jeanron's angular monolith, replaces its unyielding permanence with a nimbus bred of war, shapeless and expanding, whose density seems to be intensified rather than alleviated by the distant – too distant! – view of the city. It advances with the crowd, it grows thicker with the crowd. If we can make out the towers of Notre-Dame, dappled with red, white, and blue, it is so that we can put this scene in context; when the *tricolore* was displayed from their heights on the 28th, everyone knew who had won. History drives on in *Liberté*, as I believe it also does in *Les Petits patriotes*, not toward some fictive horizon deep in the picture space but one located, rather, somewhere in our space, somewhere behind us or to our right. What I take the comparison fundamentally to be about, then, is the effect such reorientations have on the relationship between the Revolution and the sense of time its image captures. And it is a question, I think, that has less to do with proximity than the restrictedness of representation. The two paintings figure the limits of picturing; they put us in contact with the Revolution. We share its ground. The difference between them is that Jeanron's painting stays still; for all of its disruptions, *Les Petits patriotes* remains in place. That is its modesty.

Like nearly every other painter – in this regard, Jeanron remains exceptional – Delacroix drew freely from the lithographers, reprising forms and iconographies that, by 1831, had crystallized the Revolution's image: the same low-lying barricade assembled with *pavés* and spars, the same *dramatis personae* – workers in *chemise* or *blouse*, *gamins* and *polytechniciens* and National Guards, a young bourgeois, probably a student, in *haut-de-forme* and *redingote*. Only now “the people” faces out. The *polytechnicien* falls back into the crowd, a mere head and bicorn among the pack; the National Guard lies dead across the foreground, a different kind of material for the barricade. The countenance this “people” presented – more *travailleur* than *homme du peuple* – was not one the bourgeois wished to look at. The *Journal des artistes* thought it most expedient

que les deux artistes aient tous les deux à dessein négligé ce détail (*Salon de 1831* (Paris, 1831), p. 233). See also, Hauréau, p. 482; Schoelcher, p. 228.

to have one worker speak the offense to another: “j’voudrais bien savoir, moi, pourquoi il n’y a avec la Liberté q’des gamins, deux our trois ouvriers, et un particulier amphibie qu’a une mine qui n’me revient pas du tout. Est-ce qu’il n’y avait que d’la canaille, comme y disent, à ces fameuses journées là?” “Dis moi-z-un peu où l’auteur a été prendre toutes ces figures-là,” his companion responds; “dirait-on pas q’nous étions tous laids comme des cosaques? Faut ben être enragé pour aller chercher ceux-là, quand y en avait d’si beaux dans le nombre.” Smearred with mud, even one’s *semblable* starts to resemble a savage; top-hats, too, become *canaille* should the environment dictate.

Real impropriety, however, belonged to the bare-breasted Liberty in whom this mob saw itself. The exchange continues:

Dis donc...y m’fait un drôle d’effet l’tableau; c’tè gaillarde là qui tient le drapeau, est-ce qu’elle n’a qu’une jambe? c’est joliment commode pour grimper sur les barricades!

Et sa gorge qu’est toute nue et toute sale! c’est pas mal indécent! Sais-tu q’la grande Louise q’nous avons amenée sur un canon à la place de la Bourse, était autrement tournée q’ça, et qu’elle n’avait pas l’effronterie d’aller toute nue jusqu’à la ceinture.

Y disent que c’est un personnage allégorique.

L’allégorique n’y fait de rien. C’est comme ce mort qu’est pourri là, devant les pavés; j’voudrais ben savoir qu’est-ce qu’a eu l’abomination de lui ôter son pantalon et ses bas, et d’lui faire un’cravatte de sa chemise. C’est-il aussi de l’allégorique?⁶³

The dialogue is satire, of course: written *en poissard*, it is meant to split “the people.” Its bias and tendentiousness are explicit. Yet it is as satire, as caricature, that the dialogue points toward the distinctive quality of Delacroix’s painting, its refractory combination of history and myth. *Liberté* does not oppose history to myth; they do not exist in the painting as antinomies, the one vying to negate the other. Nor does it unify them, like Michelet’s *génie*. The picture delivers them, rather, in fragments, partially, and in their fragmentariness history and myth infiltrate one another.⁶⁴ The problem for the *Journal des artistes* is not that Liberty disobeys the conventions of traditional allegory, but how she disobeys. She presents the necessary signs of abstraction: female nudity, stolid face in profile, a *bonnet rouge*, arm and hand raised and clutching a tricolor; and yet she is, as Théophile Thoré says, a “type vivant,” “la liberté incarnée dans une jeune fille.”⁶⁵ That

⁶³ Anon., “Tableaux de juillet,” *Journal des artistes* (May 15, 1831): p. 377.

⁶⁴ On the subject of fragmentation in *Liberté*, see Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, “Liberty’s Fragmented Body: Revolutionary Politics and the Instability of Allegory. An Analysis of the Initial Reception of Delacroix’s *Le 28 juillet, Liberté guidant le peuple*” (master’s thesis, University of Michigan, 1989). I would like to thank Grigsby for sharing this work with me.

⁶⁵ Thoré, “Artistes contemporains – M. Eugène Delacroix,” *Le Siècle*, February 25, 1837.

is, she is shot through with contending signifiers – a missing leg, class, nakedness, time – which render her non-self-identical. She is the one and the other, “allegory appearing in one place, on one particular day,” and so she is neither.⁶⁶ And once the metaphor fails, once the pure referent blackens with gunpowder and sex and death, the authority of that referent becomes disputable; a pantless, sockless corpse rotting in the street might be allegory, too; a *chemise* might tidy up into a *cravate*.

“Est-ce une ode? est-ce une satire?” Schoelcher inquired.

Si l'on veut prendre ces deux questions au sérieux, les dépouiller de la forme bizarre que je leur donne, faute d'en trouver une plus convenable et meilleure, si l'on veut y voir ce qu'elles renferment vraiment, l'expression d'un doute sur l'idée qui a dû préoccuper le peintre au moment où il a commencé son travail, je crois qu'on les résoudra difficilement...Le sang qui coule à flots, les crânes meurtris, les figures salies de boue et de sang, ces précoces vieillesses qui dégradent des têtes d'enfans, et ce héro improvisé qui raconte avec ses yeux éteints, ses joues caves, et ses lèvres bleues, toute sa vie de cabaret, d'ivresse et de hideuses orgies, est-ce une satire du combat, une raillerie de la victoire et du prix qu'elle a coûté? ou bien ne faut-il croire qu'à l'expression joyeuse et céleste de cette figure allégorique, de cette vigoureuse et jeune Liberté qui domine toute la composition, qui plane comme un ange aux ailes déployées sur cette scène de meurtre et de misère? S'il faut dire ma pensée tout entière, au risque de me tromper et de m'égarer en folles conjectures, je dirai que j'aperçois dans le tableau des traces incontestables, pour moi, de ces deux sentimens opposés: ode et satire, enthousiasme et mépris, admiration et dégoût, aspiration vers un avenir meilleur, et, en même temps, souvenir amer et douloureux du passé!⁶⁷

These seem to me the right questions. *Liberté* refuses to settle down into a single system of representation; it crosses frames of reference. Neither holds sway; resolution lies beyond reach. “The people” in front moves one way, “the people” behind another. Triumph in *Liberté* resides in its ambiguity, its compliance with the ideas and catchphrases of its time and its contradiction of them. That is the painting’s paradox,⁶⁸ that is the impasse in which Michelet’s “people” remains mired.

The Government purchased *Liberté* all the same, and for a while permitted Delacroix’s *machine* to hang in the Musée royal.⁶⁹ But by 1832 the painting was locked

⁶⁶ Clark, p. 18.

⁶⁷ Schoelcher, “Portraits et caractères contemporains. Eugène Delacroix,” *L’Artiste* vol. 2 (1831): pp. 179-180.

⁶⁸ Clark, p. 17.

⁶⁹ See Marrinan, p. 68.

away in storage. Doubtless the revolt of Lyons's *canuts* in November, a 4-day battle triggered by the refusal of manufacturers to regulate the price of silk and hence stabilize wages, informed the decision. The status of *Liberté* as an icon of art and politics was nevertheless already established: "enfin," Alexandre Decamps wrote amid the *rappel à l'ordre* of 1834-1835, "nous demanderons au gouvernement de juillet où est le tableau de *la Liberté* d'Eugène Delacroix, et comment il a réparé envers son auteur les torts de la restauration."⁷⁰ Across the '30s and '40s, one could not invoke the Revolution without acknowledging Delacroix's picture. *Liberté* continued to shape the meaning of the barricade, as it were, *in absentia*. In the spring of 1848, Jeanron, who was appointed *Directeur général des Musées nationaux* after the collapse of the July Monarchy in February, pulled *Liberté* out of the shadows. Once again the painting could be aligned with the myth of revolution; and once again its ambiguities proved inconvenient. After the June Days the painting disappeared. Worker and bourgeois marched off in different directions; no more did they appear as two halves of "the people" dreaming of wholeness.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Decamps, "Les arts et l'industrie au dix-neuvième siècle (2ème article)," *Revue républicaine* vol. 4 (January 1835): p. 192.

⁷¹ I am here borrowing Jonsson's language, but not his timing; my June is his July. See Jonsson, p. 44.

CHAPTER ONE

THIS IS NOT A PROGRAM

*Je hais l'inertie, l'ineptie, les platitudes consacrées;
j'adore le feu, le mouvement, la liberté et je cherche
à m'élever de la boue aux étoiles.*

– Auguste Préault, no date.¹

*M. Préault se tient comme une protestation
fougueuse; c'est un cri de colère lancé contre
l'arche sainte, c'est un coup d'ébauchoir donné au
travers de la charte de l'école, c'est un grand
émeutier en train de faire tout seul sa barricade.*

– Georges Dumesnil, in *Le Courrier Artistique*, July 5, 1863.²

*Je suis de ceux qui confessent, et sans rougir, que,
quelle que soit l'habilité développée annuellement
par nos sculpteurs, je ne retrouve pas dans leurs
œuvres...le plaisir immatériel que m'ont donné si
souvent les rêves tumultueux, même incomplets,
d'Auguste Préault.*

– Charles Baudelaire, in *Lettre à M. le Directeur de
la Revue française sur le Salon de 1859*, 1859.³

The whole is the untrue.

– Theodor Adorno, in *Minima Moralia*, 1951.⁴

When Auguste Préault's *Tuerie* (fig. 14), a bas-relief then in plaster, appeared at the Salon of 1834, it had the character of an exception. Of the five works Préault submitted that year – in addition to *Tuerie*, a figural group titled *Parias* and three medallions of Roman emperors – only *Tuerie* was accepted. Few were surprised. The hostility of the academicians who sat on the Salon jury toward the “*école nouvelle*” and its intransigent demands for creative independence had never been much of a secret; and

¹ Quoted in Théophile Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants français et étrangers, études d'après nature* (Paris, 1856), p. 286.

² Dumesnil, “La sculpture à l'exposition de 1863,” *Le Courrier Artistique*, July 5, 1863, p. 12.

³ Baudelaire, “Salon de 1859,” in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), pp. 823-24.

⁴ Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), p. 50. I have modified Jephcott's translation, which reads “the whole is the false.”

there was little indication, little reason to suspect, that their animosity might have abated. Quite the contrary, in fact. 1834 would be a year of re-entrenchments. *Il faut en finir*: the exigencies of civil society guided the stewards of traditional culture that year as much as the regime that counted on the steady flow of affirmative images they produced and maintained. The policy of a *juste milieu* had run its course. Under the circumstances, Pr eault made for an easy mark. Although the jury admitted all six of Pr eault's submissions the previous year – his first Salon – the resolute *mis erabilisme* of his more ambitious works, *Mis ere* and *Mendicit e*, left his critics ill-at-ease. Pr eault walked away from the 1833 Salon with a scarlet letter he would bear for the next decade and a half: not only, his critics grumbled, had he demonstrated an impulsiveness and irreverence unbecoming of a sculptor; true to his propensity for disobedience, he made “de l'art r epublicain.”⁵ Indeed, Pr eault's work, for many, exemplified the very worst of the excesses that the “ cole nouvelle” had by then committed. The proper course of action, according to Maximilien Raoul, was indisputable: wholesale rejection of Pr eault's work in 1834 was simply a matter of decency.⁶ Of course the jury did not reserve its contempt for Pr eault alone. It took a hard line in 1834 against any sculptor working under the banner of Romanticism: Jehan Duseigneur, Antonin Moine, even Antoine Bayre, a favorite of the duc d'Orl ans, were all absent from that year's Salon.

Needless to say, the jury's decision to admit *Tuerie* was hardly unmotivated. Of Pr eault's four rejected works none matched *Tuerie*'s brazen disregard for every rule, every standard that the jury – and the Institut – held sacred.⁷ Even Pr eault's steadfast supporters could see in *Tuerie* a sculptor carried away by his impetuosity (*fougue*); in their eyes, however, Pr eault's missteps could be forgiven, for they considered his *fanatisme*, whatever its errant ways, an enviable strength, a sign more than others of his creative autonomy, of his “originalit e” and “individualit e.”⁸ If *Tuerie* managed to escape the indiscriminate onslaught to which the jury subjected Romantic sculpture, it was not, I think it is safe to say, due to any desire on the jury's part to show clemency – the jury's coterie of academicians knew its enemy as assuredly as Pr eault knew his. It was, rather, *Tuerie*'s extremism, the extent of its transgressions and iconoclastic vigor, that earned it safe passage. With *Tuerie* Pr eault had gone too far.

According to Th ophile Silvestre, it was Jean-Pierre Cortot, a professor of sculpture at the  cole des beaux-arts and, at the time, a proponent of an austere form of Classicism, who rescued *Tuerie* from a sure fate.⁹ His advocacy for acceptance notwithstanding, Cortot harbored no admiration for the relief or the sculptor. Nor, for

⁵ J.-B. Haur eau, “Vari et es. Revue des arts. Salon,” *La Tribune politique et litt eraire*, May 3, 1833.

⁶ Maximilien Raoul, “Salon de 1834. Sculpture,” *Le Cabinet de lecture, journal de la litt erature nationale et  trang ere*, April 24, 1834, pp. 7-8.

⁷ In his academic treatise on relief sculpture, Griffoul-Dorval lists seven basic “rules”: 1) “Mettre les divers plans de chaque figure en rapport harmoniques”; 2) “Ne faire que deux plans de figures ou trois au plus, et que ces plans soient entre eux voisins imm ediats”; 3) “Eviter l'opposition trop forte d'un plan saillant pr es d'un plan trop aplati”; 4) “Ne point laisser de plans isol es, c'est- -dire, s epar es du fond, et soutenir les plans saillants par des plans secondaires”; 5) “Eviter les trop grands raccourcis”; 6) “Ne point faire de vue perspective”; 7) “Remplir le fond autant qu'il est possible.” See Griffoul-Dorval, *Essai sur la sculpture en bas-relief, ou r egles particuli eres   observer dans la pratique de cet art* (Toulouse, 1821), esp. pp. 12-13.

⁸ Paul Rochery, “Salon de 1850-1851,” *La Politique Nouvelle, revue hebdomadaire. Politiques, sciences, litt erature, beaux-arts* (6 April 1851): pp. 456-57; Bruno Galbaccio, “Beaux-Arts. Salon de 1834. Quatri eme article,” *Le Locateur. Gazette des travaux publics*, March 1834.

⁹ Silvestre, p. 294.

that matter, had he any interest in encouraging the jury to exercise restraint. His intervention, on the contrary, was motivated by a conviction that deterrence would prove a more expedient means of reclaiming the offensive than exclusion. Once admitted to the halls of the Louvre, Cortot ventured, *Tuerie* would issue a blazingly clear warning about the “désordres de l’école nouvelle” and the “frenésie de la rébellion” it brought to a fever pitch. In turn, *Tuerie*’s radicalism would not only betray its own advancements; it would play an instrumental role in neutralizing the “école nouvelle.” The security of aesthetic law and order, he thought, could do with a negative example, and *Tuerie* had all the right stuff to strike fear into the minds of young sculptors and public alike. The jury consented. They would stage a public execution and exhibit *Tuerie* “comme un malfaiteur accroché au gibet.”

Cortot’s gambit did not exactly pay off. *Tuerie*, it is true, faced its fair share of vitriolic criticism, sometimes expressed as derisive dismissal, sometimes as hysterical denunciation, sometimes as silence. But neither the mass defection nor the counter-insurgency Cortot anticipated seems to have materialized. Much, I imagine, to Cortot’s chagrin *Tuerie* became, rather, something of a *cause célèbre*, drawing rather than repelling crowds of Salon-goers who viewed the spectacle with astonishment rather than satisfaction. *Tuerie*, in other words, was seen for the exception it was supposed to be; rather than bear out the plot of Cortot’s *appel à l’ordre*, however, *Tuerie* interrupted it. Critics of every stripe remarked on the tendentious motives driving the jury’s actions, especially as the decision to admit *Tuerie* came at the expense of *Parias*, which friend and foe alike considered a truer indication of Préault’s talents and potential. Emboldened by the jury’s lack of cunning, the artistic and political Left doubled down: the jury’s “basses manœuvres” were not simply “iniques”; an egregious abuse of authority, they evidenced more conclusively than ever before the “illégalité flagrante” of the jury itself.¹⁰ Cortot’s attempt to turn *Tuerie* to the Institut’s benefit, in the end, merely highlighted the repressive intolerance for which the academic system – “notre gouvernement militaire des beaux-arts,” as Gabriel Laviron and Bruno Galbaccio put it in 1833 – had become a most reviled symbol.¹¹ Rather, that is, than bolster and legitimate the autocratic rule of the Institut and its representatives – rather than extend and reconsolidate its rule – *Tuerie* demonstrated just how precarious that rule was and the violent lengths to which its appointed guardians were willing to go to ensure its future. The clarity of Cortot’s warning, it seems, cut both ways.

The jury, all things considered, was not wrong: *Tuerie* is an unruly sculpture, aggressively so. Measuring 109 x 140 centimeters, it disobeys on a monumental scale; it declares its rebellion public and total. At its core, however, *Tuerie* remains a work in

¹⁰ Gabriel Laviron, *Salon de 1834* (Paris, 1834), p. 162. See also, Galbaccio, “Beaux-Arts. Salon de 1834,” and Alexandre Decamps, *Le Musée. Revue de Salon de 1834* (Paris, 1834), pp. 76-77. The phrase “illégalité flagrante” comes from Laviron and Galbaccio, *Salon de 1833* (Paris, 1833), p. 11. Later in the century, Victor Fournel had this to say about the relationship between Préault and his supporters: “On en fit une machine de guerre en faveur de l’art libre, émancipé, viril, qui avait brisé les vieilles lisières, – l’art de l’avenir, en un mot, contre l’art du passé, timide, étroit et routinier” (*Les Artistes français contemporains, peintres – sculpteurs* (Tours, 1884), p. 288).

¹¹ Laviron and Galbaccio, *Salon de 1833*, p. 10.

fragments – fragments of bodies and fragments of meaning, fragments of history and fragments of labor. We might, at first blush, feel compelled to think otherwise. *Tuerie* is nothing if not compact; nothing if not full. Nearly every inch of its sprawling surface swells with one body part or another, each of a different relative size, each in incompatible proportion. Nevertheless, these parts touch; they tear at one another, embrace one another, kill one another. They inhabit different spatial planes, as it were, and yet they vie, or so it seems, for the same singular space. Or do they? The more *Tuerie*'s bodies come into view, the more they seem to want to flee.¹² It is as if coming into view posed a threat no less harrowing, no less violent than its alternative. To be a part of *Tuerie*'s fullness, it turns out, means putting the integrity of one's body at risk; it means entering a centrifuge *in medias res*. The relief's frame, an enclosure delimited by the edges of bodies and enveloping swathes of hair – by the boundaries and extensions of the body, that is – consequently takes on an ambivalent aspect: it enforces one unity – a unity somehow both organic and arbitrary – while prohibiting another. The relief and its bodies cannot be whole at the same time. *Tuerie*'s is therefore no unity in the ordinary sense; a unity of the disparate, it defies totalization. Disintegration is intrinsic to it.¹³

More than one critic, dismayed by *Tuerie*'s irreconcilable antinomies, likened the relief's maelstrom of writhing, disproportionate, and partial bodies to a madman's dream. "Archi-fantastique" and grotesque, cried some; savage, barbaric, *imprévu*, bemoaned others.¹⁴ Sympathetic critics drew from a comparable set of terms; but for them, estimable names like Dante and Charles Maturin – references, no doubt, meant to pull *Tuerie* into familiar space and to put it in contact with current aesthetic tendencies – came more genially to the tongue. Of course the language of irrationalism Préault's detractors leaned on was similarly contrived; the boundaries of normative culture had to be reinforced; transgressions had to be punished, had to be declared alien. The same vocabulary, as it were, could be, and indeed was, made to serve competing ideological interests. The nightmare, the agony of interminable torment, the Melmothian pact: all three nevertheless have a certain poignancy, even a certain accuracy about them. They get the timbre of *Tuerie* right. *Tuerie* is a horror-show; it makes a horror-show out of sculpture. The emphasis *Tuerie* puts on pain, suffering, and violence, however – its

¹² "Tout veut fuir." Anne Pingeot, "Reliefs," in *Le corps en morceaux* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées nationaux, 1990), p. 222.

¹³ Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin are constant presences throughout this chapter, especially Adorno's work on the relationship between parts (the fragment) and wholes (totality), integration and disintegration (form), dissonance and harmony, and Benjamin's work on allegory, violence, and destructiveness. Rather than cite every instance where their language and ideas have informed my own (unless quoted), which would be cumbersome, I will simply list the key sources here: Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum, 1973); Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Adorno, "Form in the New Music," *Music Analysis* 27 (2008): pp. 201-216; Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings volume 1, 1913-1926*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004), pp. 236-252; Benjamin, "The Destructive Character," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, volume 2, part 2, 1931-1934*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005), pp. 541-542; Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998).

¹⁴ "Archi-fantastique" is Raoul's term; "imprévu" is Jules Salmson's (*Entre deux coups de ciseau, souvenirs d'un sculpteur* (Paris, 1892), pp. 60-68). For the sharpest of these accounts, see Charles Farcy, "L'Ecole moderne," *Journal des artistes* (July 5, 1834): pp. 1-6, as well as his "Une Macédoine," *Journal des artistes* (July 12, 1834): pp. 17-25.

insistence, that is, that sculpture attend to actions and states-of-being outside of its traditional domain – scandalized only the most conservative and reactionary among Préault’s critics. Violence *per se* was not *Tuerie*’s offense. What flummoxed Préault’s critics, rather, was the indeterminacy of that violence. *Tuerie* leaves too many vital questions unanswered, we are told. It makes suffering palpable, it articulates the cruelty and terror of violence with brutal force: so much could be conceded; but it gives that suffering, that violence, no identifiable ground, no discernable reason or cause or purpose. It denies us the reassurances of narrative and the justifications, however objectionable, of logic. It denies us the safety of iconography, the certainty of identity and locality and chronology, never mind their consistency with one another. This *tuerie* has neither end nor origin – it has no knowable history and therefore cannot be seen as necessary – and in that respect, it is senseless, a heteroclite collection of broken bodies reeling in an agony that defies first principles. What it does offer us are parts, and those parts, those fragments, become refractory; they are signs of suffering without meaning. None of this is to suggest that *Tuerie* withholds. Withholding comes too close to excision or erasure or repression; it implies foreknowledge and deliberateness, economy and control. One withholds in order to integrate, to make whole what otherwise would not – indeed, could not – be. *Tuerie* has no such pretension.

Long ago Luc Benoist distilled *Tuerie*’s diverse achievements down to one: the pressure the relief exerts on its materials, the way it pushes those materials – plaster and bronze, on the one hand, relief sculpture as a structurally and institutionally determined medium, on the other – to the limits of what was then considered possible: “Puis son souci est de faire grand. Mais comme une certaine limite est imposée par la matière même, il ne fera qu’un *fragment*. Il fera servir cette limitation voulue du fragment à une impression de colossal...cette œuvre unique, même chez Préault, est un chef-d’œuvre...en raison de ses lacunes.”¹⁵ Let me rephrase: *Tuerie* affirms its materials as a way of destroying them. Benoist’s conclusion seems to me the closest we have to a dialectical assessment of *Tuerie*, simply because it suggests how materiality, for Préault, could be both limitation and possibility, how the one could be mediated by the other while negating it. The result is chaotic to be sure, a relief that, in refusing to subordinate form to coherent effects, verges on incomprehensibility. The work asserts itself, as it were, but remains elusive, full of unfillable holes. The lacunae matter, then, but not as mere absences to the relief’s explosive presence, not, that is, as mere unintelligibility. *Tuerie* is recalcitrant more than reticent, intractable more than incoherent.

Over the years, art historians have tended either to neglect or to defer this quality of Préault’s work. They have sought, conversely, to domesticate the relief and its iconographic and formal instabilities. They have rifled through the source materials dear to the French Romantics looking for thematic clues, concocting in turn strange brews and literary admixtures – a little Hugo here, a touch of Shakespeare there, perhaps some

¹⁵ Benoist, *La sculpture romantique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 116. See also Pingot, pp. 219-220; and Isabelle Leroy-Jay Lemaistre, “Ses œuvres sont les strophes en pierre, en marbre, en bois, du poème de la douleur humaine,” in *Auguste Préault: sculpteur romantique, 1809-1879* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), pp. 79-87.

Walter Scott, Auguste Barbier, Dante, or even the New Testament.¹⁶ They have mined the history of art in search of formal precedence – Caravaggio’s *Kiss of Judas* (fig. 15), we have been led to believe, anticipates the compositional relationship between the central female and the skeletal *chevalier* to her left, Girodet’s *Ossian* (fig. 16) the matrix of *têtes d’expression*.¹⁷ In the most compelling of these arguments, Jonathan Ribner demonstrates how Préault likely conceived *Tuerie* as a “pessimistic revision” of Henri de Triqueti’s two reliefs for the Palais Bourbon, *La Loi protectrice* and *La Loi vengeresse* (1833-1834; figs. 17-18), both of which, in glorifying the civilizing force of law, worked to legitimate the July Monarchy’s authority and the version of constitutional legalism on which it was purportedly founded.¹⁸ Art historians have sought, as it were, to give “specificity to the [relief’s] generalized *fougue*,”¹⁹ working hard to discover a thematic and formal logic – a holistic and consistent logic – in a relief sculpture that, in the end, has none. Of course, the impulse to do so – that is, to seek to ground the relief’s excesses and extremism – is understandable. As a means of doing so, however, source hunting yields few concrete rewards, for nothing in the work sits still long enough for such interpretive gestures to gain steady traction. What clues *Tuerie* does offer up are just that, clues, maybe lures, maybe even bait. My point is not that we should disregard the clues *Tuerie* serves up; they provide a basis, however fragile, on which meanings can be established. But neither can we pretend that those clues stabilize the relief, or that the coherence they hint at is anything but provisional and episodic. If we do, we see definiteness where we know it is not; if we do, we work against the sculpture itself.

I have little doubt, as it were, that the iconographic and formal allusions to which art historians have pointed are indeed there. There is no denying, for instance, that Préault had a literary turn of mind, or that he espoused a distinctly “Romantic” fascination with violence and suffering. He occupied a regular seat at Théophile Gautier’s *petit cénacle*, and was a militant follower of Hugo. During the *bataille d’Hernani*, a formative event for the generation of 1830, he assailed the ossified ranks of the rear-guard with caustic rejoinders: “A la guillotine, les genoux!” he famously belted out from the parterre.²⁰ It makes perfect sense, in other words, that he would draw inspiration for his *chevalier* from Hugo’s *Hernani*, or that the “nègre” at upper left would come from a viewing of *Othello* (Alfred de Vigny’s *Le More de Venise* debuted at the Comédie-Française on October 24, 1829). We know, as well, that he was an avid reader of Barbier’s *Iambes*, which provided his generation with a ready-made imagery – mythic,

¹⁶ See especially David Mower, “Antoine Augustin Préault (1809-1879),” *The Art Bulletin* vol. 63, no. 2 (June 1981): p. 293; and Nancy Davenport, “Sources for Préault’s *Tuerie*, *fragment épisodique d’un grand bas-relief*,” *Source* vol. 11, no. 1 (Fall 1991): pp. 22-30. Mower’s account of Préault’s sources, the recipe-like formulation of which I have borrowed, is indicative. He begins with a quotation from Benoist, which addresses the relief’s indeterminacies: “Est-ce un Massacre des Innocents ou un scène de cinquième acte de mélodrame romantique?” Then comes his ingredient list, with cursory explanations. What he overlooks is Benoist’s question mark, which I take to be operative.

¹⁷ On Caravaggio’s *Kiss of Judas*, see Davenport, pp. 25-28; on Girodet’s *Ossian*, see Isabelle Leroy-Jay Lemaistre’s catalogue entry for *Tuerie* in *Auguste Préault: sculpteur romantique*, p.132.

¹⁸ Ribner, “Henri de Triqueti, Auguste Préault, and the Glorification of Law under the July Monarchy,” *The Art Bulletin* vol. 70, no. 3 (September 1988): pp. 486-501. Ribner later republished the essay in *Broken Tablets: The Cult of the Law in French Art from David to Delacroix* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 70-97. References throughout will be to the version published in *The Art Bulletin*.

¹⁹ Davenport, p. 25.

²⁰ Théophile Gautier, *Histoire du romantisme* (Paris, 1874), p. 97.

shared, damning – around which it could rally; any one of the *Iambes* can be made into a source. Nor is there denying that Préault knew his history of art. A fleeting glance at Girodet's preparatory drawings for his *Ossian* makes plain that Préault had likely seen them, even if we cannot be sure of the extent of his engagement with them (or, for that matter, the final painting). We would probably want to insert Baron Gros here, too, whose *Bataille d'Eylau* (fig. 19) would have shown Préault how to configure a tangled mass of bodies struggling at once to kill and stay alive. First-generation Davidians were not the targets of Préault's enmity; they were not "genoux" – all reflex, all obeisance. Even more than Gros and *La Bataille d'Eylau*, however, we would have to add the dense, criss-crossing network of half-dead, partial bodies – some white, others black, some French, others *étrangers*, all of them *touching* – in Géricault's *Radeau*.²¹ We would have to dispense with Napoléon's confidence.

The references are there. There are probably more of them, if we should look hard and long and creatively enough. That, I suppose, is the point: *they*, not *it*, are there. Individually, no one of them can explain the relief; added one to the other they cannot explain the relief. They do not form an aggregate whole. *Tuerie* is not simply eclectic, a summation of Préault's artistic pedigree. Each reference, on the contrary, sits incongruously (thematically as well as temporally) next to the other: a Moorish general known for his rash act of jealousy next to Don Ruy Gomez de Silva, "un vieillard homérique selon le moyen âge,"²² next to Barbier's Liberty who supports both an Innocent and a dying Christ, all of them cast adrift in *L'Enfer*. *Tuerie*, to put the matter plainly, crosses frames of reference; it blocks connotation by multiplying it, by permitting no single system of signs to hold sway. There is no way, then, to read one reference through another, or even to make sense of their relationship. They are citations ripped out of context and reconfigured; they are citations – fragments juxtaposed and superimposed – without the stabilizing partitions of quotation marks. A *mêlée*.²³ What Préault's references are is in itself of relatively minor interest; enumerating them one by one merely confirms that Préault shared the aesthetic preferences of his peers; indeed, itemizations simplify the relief by reducing it to a question of changing tastes; in a word, they circumvent the relief's specificity. It is enough that the references are there, that there are many of them, and that no one of them is granted privileged status. They are fragments – partial, provisional, and equal; they accelerate shifts in meaning rather than anchor it. For them to matter, they must be there together, if held apart; they must be allowed to work both with and against one another. Taken individually, in isolation, they lose their flavor, or worse, they assume a consistency at odds with the relief itself. The incongruities are vital.

Art historians have been more circumspect when considering *Tuerie*'s political resonances. This is not to say that any one of them questions Préault's political orientation; that Préault aligned himself with the Republican opposition – this is

²¹ On the thematics of contact (racial as well as bodily) in Géricault's *Radeau*, the fourth chapter of Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby's *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) is indispensable.

²² Victor Hugo, *Hernani* (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1866), p. 43 [note 1].

²³ C. Bataille refers to *Tuerie* as "cette mêlée, sans nom... cette mêlée de figures de toutes les races, de tous les temps, toutes humaines" ("Auguste Préault," *Diogenes, portraits et biographies satiriques des hommes du dix-neuvième siècle*, January 25, 1857, p. 2).

something his contemporaries never tire of turning to their advantage – is nowhere in doubt. Neither is Préault’s commitment, at least in the early 1830s, to having that politics inform his practice. His major submissions to the Salon of 1833 – *Misère* and *Mendicité*, two works (now lost) that addressed the deleterious effects of poverty in the starkest of terms – declare that conviction openly enough. Critics, by turns, disparaged and lauded the “proletarian” theme of the two works. Where the former deplored Préault’s assimilation of “ugly” theme and “ugly” execution – his disdain, as Raoul put it, for form – the latter, and Pétrus Borel in particular, exalted the sculptor for understanding that the “question révolutionnaire” was “toute morale,” and not a superficial matter of exchanging the Classical with the Romantic (“des danseurs napolitains au lieu de Faunes ou de Bacchus, des Pépins au lieu d’Ajax”).²⁴ Galbaccio and Laviron, a bust of whom Préault exhibited at the same Salon, were even more forthright: at stake for Galbaccio and Laviron, and what they singled out as the fundamental question addressed by Préault’s sculpture, was the social nature of art.²⁵ For them, art, if it was to fulfill its “but véritable,” had to act on society; it had to make society legible by internalizing the conditions under which it was lived and by giving expression to their contradictions. Thus, they imagined, opened the way to progress. “Actualité” had therefore to be art’s material – its singular determination – if it was to be alive, if it was to keep pace with history, if, in a word, it was to be truthful.²⁶ What mattered for Galbaccio and Laviron, then, was the directness – perhaps even the immediacy – with which *Misère* and *Mendicité* realized their subject. Similar things can be, and were, said about *Tuerie*. Unlike *Misère* and *Mendicité*, however, *Tuerie* does not announce its social content explicitly. *Misère* and *Mendicité*, it is true, are abstractions; they represent no one in particular, they conjure no definite period in history, they inhabit no specific locality. They are poverty pure and simple, its actualization. These are qualities they share with *Tuerie*. Nevertheless, they remain positive statements that come at their subject – immiseration, or, the failed promise of mid-century liberalism to reconcile the interests of the individual with those of society – head on.

I do not mean to suggest, *pace* Ribner, that *Tuerie*’s relationship to politics is implicit. For Ribner, *Tuerie*’s achievement lies in the way it embodies an entrenched antipathy to the ideals, values, and tastes of the July Monarchy without, however, adopting the overt political strategies of caricature, without, as it were, being *engagé*. Seen as such, *Tuerie* becomes an exercise in ideology critique: by transforming Triqueti’s apotheosis of constitutional law, under the auspices of which order, justice, and civilization unite in triumph, into chaotic and barbaric slaughter, it exposes the hypocrisy of Triqueti’s reliefs and, by extension, the image the July Monarchy constructed for itself.²⁷ *Tuerie*, in a word, shatters the July Monarchy’s origin-myth, pointing up the young regime’s betrayals and the contradictions it worked diligently to mask. It is a

²⁴ Raoul, “Beaux-arts. Salon de 1833. Sculpture,” *Le Cabinet de lecture* (4 May 1833): p. 12. Borel, “Des artistes penseurs et des artistes creux,” *L’Artiste* vol. 5, no. 21 (1833): p. 259. Of the male figure in *Mendicité*, Jean Reynaud remarked, “c’est l’Ugolin prolétaire, muré avec sa famille dans la misère comme dans une tour” (“Coup-d’oeil sur l’exposition de sculpture,” *Revue encyclopédique* (March 1833): p. 580). Gustave Planche accused Préault of sculpting caricatures (“Salon de 1833,” *Revue des Deux Mondes* vol. 2 (1833): p. 196). Hauréau, as noted above, praised the republicanism of Préault’s works.

²⁵ Laviron and Galbaccio, *Salon de 1833*, p. 41.

²⁶ Laviron and Galbaccio, *Salon de 1833*, pp. 28-30.

²⁷ Ribner, pp. 497-450.

mighty argument, I think, and right in more ways than one. Most enlightening, perhaps, is the complex constellation of historical structures and processes Ribner puts in place. Rightly, he locates *Tuerie* in a political context determined not by specific events but by the general rhythm – an intensifying and accelerating rhythm between 1830 and 1834 – of insurrection and repression;²⁸ that is, by the hastening and inexorable pace of social disintegration in the early 1830s and the prerogative, of bourgeois power, to instrumentalize violence as a justifiable means to social progress. These last phrases are mine more than Ribner’s, adjustments meant to bring the dialectical relationship between power and violence, disintegration and totality into sharper focus; yet they are, at the same time, what Ribner’s assertion about the implicitness of *Tuerie*’s relationship to contemporary politics – that this relationship is subsumed by aesthetic concerns – misconstrues. *Tuerie* may take Triqueti’s reliefs as its target, it may belie the mystifications of their formal idealism and the official rhetoric they promulgate; *Tuerie*’s negativity is not in question. I think we misrepresent the work *Tuerie* does, however, if we limit its critical force to the denunciation of the July Monarchy’s hypocrisy. No doubt the denunciation is there; no doubt it is, in part, what the relief wants to be. Nevertheless, the tendentiousness denunciation implies gives me pause; it aligns too easily, or rather too one-sidedly with what we have been told about Préault’s notoriously corrosive and pessimistic wit (an accord, incidentally, which Ribner crystallizes as evidence). What seems to me to be lacking here is an account of the restiveness with which Préault denounces, of his awareness that negation necessarily leads on to uncertain territory. Missing, then, is what Silvestre describes as the “rires nerveux” that gave Préault’s “négations ironiques et...affirmations impérieuses” their singular flavor.²⁹ Préault understood that success and futility were never too far apart; he recognized that negation was precarious even when triumphant.

Investing *Tuerie*’s seven figures with one literary value or another brings us no closer to knowing them; nor does seeing them as inversions of one false image or another. Neither quite stands up as mediation. *Tuerie*’s lacunae remain lacunae; its violence remains indeterminate; the nature of the struggle these men and women are engaged in remains groundless. We cannot *give* this *tuerie* a history any more than we can place it, truly size up its protagonists and antagonists – any more, that is, than we can make its *dramatis personae*, as it were, add up. The relation of one figure to the next is enigmatic, an obstacle we cannot, with any certainty, overcome. Each of the them is partial, even singular; each maintains its difference. Together they constitute a multitude – artificial, reactionary, contingent, panicked – rather than a people.

Take, for instance, the black figure at upper left. To Préault’s critics, who referred to him simply as “le nègre,” he signaled in no uncertain terms the savage and wanton aggression of the racial Other. Nothing surprising there: this is a pat response, predictable for the way it conflates uncontrolled expressivity, physiognomic difference,

²⁸ Albert Boime establishes a similar political context for *Tuerie*, but treats the relationship between history and the relief as a one-way street. See Boime, *Hollow Icons: The Politics of Sculpture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1987), pp. 46-53.

²⁹ Silvestre, p. 282.

violence, and black skin into a indivisible identity, immediately legible and fixed. Of course this is not to say that the racism of Préault's critics is not a part of the relief itself. What blackness did for Préault's critics, nevertheless, was bring the relief's unknowable violence into some sort of focus, into some sort of definition; namely, it located that violence within a familiar system of signs with readily available meanings. Albert Boime, who otherwise extols *Tuerie* for its political correctness and the barbarism it attributes to the operations of power, isolates the black figure as Préault's principal failure – evidence, he says, of Préault's socialized racial blindness – and as an indication of *Tuerie*'s critical limitations.³⁰ Boime's response is reasonable, and I do not wish to minimize the value of its contribution. Agreed, Préault's reliance on racial stereotypes and what they say about his inability to see oppression outside of that with which he could identify is disappointing. Condemnation only goes so far, however; it tells us hardly anything about the role the black man actually plays in *Tuerie*, much less his relation, say, to the *chevalier* on his right, whose medievalizing helmet, deathly countenance, and modish mustache, although declarative and even specifiable, make the knight no more understandable than his neighbor. Indeed, the *chevalier*'s impassivity, which the obscurity of his sunken eyes renders all the more inscrutable, and the inconsistency of his iconographical make-up seem to place him not just somewhere else and in some other time, but nowhere in particular, in no one time. His is the sight of death, out of time and out of place. Maybe I should have said non-relation, then, or even antagonism.

Then there is the woman at center, a giant who presses a small child against her breast; her gesture appears both protective and nurturing, her hand firm yet forgiving, the space between her raised chin and her shoulder a perfect match for the child's cocked head – a mother's shelter from the storm. This child, centrally positioned and listless, is the closest *Tuerie* gives us to a full body: the child is almost complete, almost certainly dead. Presumably our heroine, the child's mother (some have likened her to Medea, others to Rude's Victory) is nonetheless the most generalized and abstract figure in the relief – harder featured than her swooning counterpart, less sensual, more sculptural, a sharp-edged profile planted on a powerful and impossibly elongated neck. She roars some sort of battle-cry, but it is tight-lipped, oddly free of affect; it has a breathless, even permanent quality to it, which is relieved only by the wild flow of her hair and the oblique angle of her neck; it lacks direction if not dynamism, or at least it lacks the clear determination of the man behind her, who cries out like her but who, in spite of the hand stiffly braced against his neck, charges toward the relief's left edge. Even if, for him, death is inevitable, he can choose where and how it comes to him. Finally, the man at lower right, who, bare breasted, collapses under his own weight: he is both the companion and antithesis of the woman at center. If she is marmoreal, he is all flesh, pliant and susceptible and beautiful; his are the only wounds we see, evidence that weapons (the *chevalier*'s?) are somewhere at play. Like the thumb (her thumb?) that pushes up against his supple breast, these wounds indicate his vulnerability as human – he falls victim both to technological and natural forces, weaponry and gravity; at the same time, their coarse tactility reminds us that he is without question sculpture. Nearly in the round, he has, moreover, a ponderousness the other figures do not: it seems that

³⁰ Boime, p. 50-53.

what makes this man most sculptural is also what makes him most human. We might do well, then, to search for some relation between him and the black figure, his Other in both space and kind, yet a man nonetheless human – nonetheless of a human world – for the way his body loses control of itself. Where the black man is gnarled and roughly hewn, however, the man at lower right, his wounds excepted, is graceful and polished; in the one instance sculpture describes form, in the other it is subsumed by form.³¹

There is, as it were, a strange balance to *Tuerie*, but it is precarious, always on the verge of losing control; it is held in place by strings, or rather tendrils of hair that weave in and out of the relief's figures. Hair indeed takes on an unusually active role in *Tuerie*; it is binding and liquid, motile and yet the relief's narrow hope for stability. In a word, *Tuerie* is composed, but only just so. Its composition is fragile, unreliable, even threatening; rather than allay the uncertainties we might have, it amplifies them. Neither perspective nor ground line guides us through *Tuerie*'s intractable cluster of bodily fragments, and any attempt to match up hands to bodies, heads and faces to bodies and hands, any attempt, that is, to understand how these figures are situated in relation to one another and within the space they occupy is likely to end in frustration. No *mis-en-scène* – no logical organization of space – places them, or us. *Tuerie*'s radically collapsed planes, which exacerbate the precipitous shifts in proportion from one body to the next, and modeling, which intensifies rather than mitigates the contrasts between areas of projection and recessed shadow, render the relief still more difficult to sort out. Space in *Tuerie* works neither notionally nor phenomenologically; it seems to be of an order entirely its own – damaged, divided, particular to each figure. Simply put, the relief refuses to coalesce around fixed points of orientation. On the contrary, it foregrounds contradiction: the relief is dense but also acute, saturated but also elliptical, emplaced but also displaced. In so doing, *Tuerie* flies in the face of the period's most valued frames of reference: restraint and decorum, equilibrium and self-sufficiency, oneness, wholeness, completeness. Any explanation, then, that seeks to give order to *Tuerie*'s congested virtual world, to clarify it, or to demystify it by stabilizing the relief's internal structures inevitably loses its footing. The relief, in effect, makes a point of resisting our synthesizing efforts even as it prods us on to pursue them.

The title of the relief, which Préault inscribes at an oblique angle above the central figure's upturned brow, is no more forthcoming. In its most rudimentary sense, "tuerie" connotes an act of killing; yet it designates no particular kind of killing, just the act and the violence it objectifies. Most scholars, in an attempt to give Préault's relief a more meaningful specificity, translate "Tuerie" into English as "Slaughter." Peter Fusco has suggested, in addition to "Slaughter," "Carnage."³² Others have opted for "Massacre." To be sure, these translations have something compelling about them; they evoke the brutality of the relief's violence and the degradation it entails with lurid

³¹ These two alternatives often defined critical attitudes toward sculpture in the nineteenth century. See Anne Wagner, *Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux: Sculptor of the Second Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 24-27.

³² Fusco, "Allegorical Sculpture," in *The Romantics to Rodin*, eds. Peter Fusco and H. W. Janson (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1980), p. 62.

poignancy. All the same, I remain unconvinced that we should – or can – venture any further than “Killing,” though killing in Préault’s relief, I recognize, is something that appears to occur *en masse* and that produces agonizing, even dehumanizing suffering. *Tuerie*, in other words, is indeed a scene of slaughter, carnage its inevitable result. Yet “tuerie,” as a term, is prosaic, even banal, its affect tied more to the base realities of body-on-body violence than to its possible meanings. Meanings, but not necessarily spaces and the conditions of their operation: according to the 6th edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française*, published in 1835, familiar speech used “tuerie” not only as a substitute for “abattoir,” but also as shorthand for *those* crowds that, if entered, proved difficult to exit unharmed – for the killing fields and the riot, we might say. That Préault deliberately omitted a requisite article (“la” or “une”) reinforces the title’s spatial over thematic resonance. *Tuerie* represents no particular act of killing, historical or otherwise; it proposes no narrative thread that might hold it together or elaborate its content. Nor does it project some indefinite incident of killing, *une tuerie*. In Préault’s hands, “tuerie” designates a point where act and site of killing coincide. That “Killing” is a gerund, a progressive verb reified as noun – that is, neither wholly noun nor verb – is by no means incidental to my preference for it as a translation.

Tuerie’s non-determination has been taken by many scholars as an indication of the relief’s allegorical mode.³³ The inference makes a good amount of sense. The way Préault inscribes “*TUERIE*” above his female protagonist, a calculated reproduction of the word/image relationship typical of allegorical personification, provides reasonable grounds on which to stake the claim. Yet accounts of *Tuerie* that look for an immediate relationship between the title and the relief’s image – or the Fury at its center – all too easily elide the startling incongruity between the placidness of the inscription’s block capitals and the paroxysmal violence it describes, which, if anything, points up the strangeness – even the inadequacy – of the literary device. Gautier, one of Préault’s most ardent defenders, gets somewhere close to the point:

La Tuerie de Préault, bas-relief dont le sens a paru obscur à quelques personnes, nous semble à nous le plus clair du monde. L’idée qui a présidé à cette composition est de la même nature que celle qui a dicté à Decamps sa grande page de la bataille des Cimbres, qu’il a sans doute appelée ainsi pour lui donner une plus grande importance, et qui devrait s’appeler tout simplement la bataille, comme Rome s’appelait *Urbs*, – c’est-à-dire la bataille par excellence. – Ce sont des combattans inconnus qui luttent dans un champ de bataille étrange; on ne sait ni à quelle nation, ni à quelle époque ils appartiennent; mais cela est d’un très médiocre intérêt: ce sont peut-être des Parthes, des Vandales, des Perses ou des Grecs, je n’en sais rien, et je n’ai nulle envie de le savoir; ce que je sais, c’est que ce sont des hommes qui se battent et du bras et du coeur, de tout leur sang et de

³³ See especially Fusco, pp. 61-62.

toute leur chair, qui n'ont d'autre pensée et d'autre désir
que la bataille.³⁴

Gautier is surely right to minimize the importance of *Tuerie*'s whos, whens, and wheres. It is the thing itself – “la bataille” – that matters. What Gautier gets right, in other words, is that Préault's figures not only act out this “bataille par excellence,” they embody it, they become it; they become its torments, its suffering, its agony, its extremity – “c'est la bataille à son dernier degré d'expression et de furie.” Still, Gautier's confidence in the relief's clarity stands in sharp contrast with what he says next. He seems uninterested in the work his repetition of the passive verb “s'appeler” does, carrying on instead with a description that establishes an affirmative relationship between *Tuerie* and “bataille” as if the one were equivalent with other: *Tuerie* is “battle” as Rome is “city.” That is, his assurance of *Tuerie*'s clarity normalizes the relationship, pulling the relief into a familiar – and traditional – category. And yet “s'appeler” lingers: *Tuerie* ought to be called “battle” as Rome is called “city.” My point here is fairly straightforward: if *Tuerie* is allegorical, it is an allegory that foregrounds the non-identity between the particularity of its image and the generalizing concept there to frame it – between image and word, execution and objectification. It is, in other words, an allegory aware of the pressures particularity puts on conceptualization – on its simplifications and amplifications – however elusive and abstracted the relief appears to be. Should we see *Tuerie* as the fulfillment of its concept, as Gautier believes we should, the end result becomes all the more devastating, all the more extreme, all the more stridently negative: perceived as such, *Tuerie* is “battle” bereft of meaning; it liquidates the concept itself.

At the end of his review, Gautier shifts gears:

Cette année, sans aucune raison, le jury lui a refusé...un groupe de Parias beaucoup plus complet à tous égards que ce qu'il a fait jusqu'ici, et n'a admis de lui, dans une intention évidemment malévole, que ce fragment de bas-relief, dont le mérite, tout grand qu'il soit, est plus difficile à comprendre, et ne peut être saisi que par les gens de l'art.³⁵

His declaration of *Tuerie*'s clarity ought to be taken obliquely. “Le plus clair du monde” is a purposeful overstatement; and there is little question as to who “quelques personnes” really were. The assertion, in other words, was never meant to be criticism; it was an act of defense, Gautier's way of deflating the equally overblown invectives to which *Tuerie* and Préault had been subjected by a hostile art establishment. Polemical though his attack might have been, Gautier was nevertheless wrong to insist that clarity be the measure from which to launch a counter-offensive. *Tuerie* is not clear, and Gautier knew it; his closing remarks even seem to suggest that, for him, *Tuerie*'s value lay in its difficulty. A misdirection, then, Gautier's opening salvo has the disadvantageous effect of simplifying his more fundamental point about how *Tuerie* embodies suffering.

³⁴ Gautier, “Salon de 1834,” *La France industrielle* (April 1834): p. 22.

³⁵ Gautier, p. 22.

Contrary to his wishes, I suspect, he fixes *Tuerie* as a noun: it is battle rather than battle in the making; it is a thing – an object of consumption – rather than a process.

There is, then, an alternative way of reading Gautier's assertion, one that stays true to his polemical tone but locates it more squarely within contemporary debates. Here the question pertains less to the transparency of meaning than to the relationship between meaning and means of expression. Galbaccio put it this way: "Chez [Préault] l'art procède par les idées morales déduites du fond du sujet. Son bas-relief (*une Tuerie*) est non seulement plein de verve, de puissance, de relief et d'animation; mais il renferme encore des caractères et des passions largement exprimés. Les mains de l'artiste ont forcé le drame à grouiller sous le plâtre."³⁶ Préault's principle achievement, according to Galbaccio, was to invert the conventional relationship between form and content – that is, to make form, and sculptural material, responsive to content rather than systematically imposing it according to the sterile formulas of accepted practice. For Galbaccio, the inversion bore social significance: it marked a radical break with the Academy's abstractions and entry "dans la réalité de la vie et dans la substance intime des choses"³⁷ – it was, plainly put, a sign of a liberated practice, of an authentic vision no longer alienated by rule and convention. For Préault's detractors, the opposite was true: Préault not only impugned the protocols of academic practice, overthrowing the principle of rule and enthroning the principle of irregularity, he reveled in the disorder he both produced and extolled. "Brûler ce qu'on avait adoré, et d'adorer ce qu'on avait brûlé": this was Charles Farcy's disdainful, if not inaccurate, way of summing up Préault's destructive practice.³⁸ Galbaccio would not have disagreed.

Unlike Galbaccio (or, for that matter, Farcy), Gautier preferred *Parias* to *Tuerie*; and he did so for two entwined reasons. On the one hand, he considered *Parias* the more accessible sculpture, capable of addressing those outside the narrow ranks of the "gens de l'art" for whom the challenges posed by *Tuerie*'s formal innovations might have had something meaningful to say. On the other hand, he deemed *Parias* "beaucoup plus complet à tous égards." Gautier elaborates no further; accessibility and completeness – intimations rather than descriptions – are all he gives us. "À tous égards," nevertheless, says quite enough on its own, for the phrase, in its inclusiveness, preempts questions of finish or surface quality, neither of which would have rubbed Gautier the wrong way, but both of which, in the eyes of Préault's adversaries, would have sounded alarms. Wary of over-determined equations between finish and social responsibility, Gautier needed completeness to retain a critical edge without, however, letting it slide into tired ideological categories; he needed it to be taken almost literally, as a question of integrity, of internal coherence and autonomy rather than manufacture. He wanted the work of art to be reconciled with itself; he wanted it to demonstrate the principle of universal communicability. *Parias* did, *Tuerie* – "ce fragment de bas-relief" – did not.

Gautier was not wrong to orient his final assessment of *Tuerie* around the fragment. Indeed, he was simply following Préault's lead. When Préault submitted *Tuerie*, he appended to it the parenthetical subtitle *fragment épisodique d'un grand bas-relief*. From the outset, then, Préault begged the question of completeness. Criticism of *Tuerie*, accordingly, would always already be mediated by a thematics of incompleteness.

³⁶ Galbaccio, "Salon de 1834."

³⁷ Laviron, "Progrès de nos doctrines," *La Liberté, journal des arts* no. 18 (January 1833): p. 133.

³⁸ Farcy, "L'Ecole moderne," p. 3.

The subtitle, however, was provocation more than apology. With it Préault only hinted at a larger project, never naming or describing it; nor did he propose an architectural context into which *Tuerie* might be fitted. Even so, Laviron distinguished *Tuerie* among that year's offerings for being the only bas-relief capable of meeting the structural and social demands of an architectural setting.³⁹ Partial and homeless, in other words, *Tuerie* inhabited a relation it both intimated and denied; it made a point of its relation to the world outside it; and it made that relation, as absence, meaningful. In short, by identifying *Tuerie* as a fragment Préault called attention to the larger work's perpetual state of incompleteness; what he produced and exhibited could only ever be understood as part of an absent whole. It was a ruin without ruination, or a ruin that anticipated ruination, or a ruin as ruination. At the same time, however, he insisted on *Tuerie*'s potentiality as fragment, its simultaneous pointing outside of itself – toward the colossal, beyond Art – as well as inward toward its own hermetic (a)logic.

The fragment, in a word, is *Tuerie*'s optic. By this I do not mean that some conception of the whole simply vanishes, only that the part – the fragment – puts pressure on the whole, challenges its priority, breaks down its authority as a determining construct. Relational rather than absolute – perfect, we might say, only in its imperfection – the fragment is a negative form, which interrupts the totalizing gaze (and hence the illusion of coherence) by challenging the unambiguous value of details within the economy of the whole. For Préault, it is also violent; or rather, in *Tuerie* it is violent, the result of contradictory processes. For form, in *Tuerie*, emerges from the fragmentation of form. *Tuerie*, that is, belies any pretense to integration in the usual sense – its own prerogative, as it were, to be what it cannot. What completes the work is its disintegration.

“Ce n'est pas tout de détruire, il faut reconstruire. Que bâtirez-vous donc sur les décombres que vous allez faire? – Eh! messieurs, rien, notre génération au moins.”⁴⁰ The exchange is fictional, the sort of thing Philippe-Auguste Jeanron imagines “indifférens,” “niais,” and “égoïstes” – the old men of the Institut, say, or the critics who support them, or the hacks who represent their interests in the Assembly – putting to artists like himself, like Préault. The dialogue comes midway through the first installment of a two-part article Jeanron published in the radical and trenchantly iconoclastic art journal *La Liberté*. Titled “De l'anarchie dans les arts,” the article, not unlike the journal in which it appears, is part polemic, part manifesto. Jeanron's target, above all, is the Academy and the mephitic doctrine it enforces with the primary purpose of reproducing itself. A disciple of Philippe Buonarrotti, Jeanron promotes a conspiratorial course of action: only by driving traditional culture to the point of crisis, he contends, will the arts be delivered from the beleaguered condition in which the Academy incarcerates them; only then will they be equipped to confront the present.⁴¹ “On doit briser vos loix,” he writes later on, “vos ordonnances, vos chaires et vos statuts. On doit anarchiser l'art si on veut le sauver.

³⁹ Laviron, *Salon de 1834*, p. 164.

⁴⁰ Philippe-Auguste Jeanron, “De l'anarchie dans les arts (premier article),” *La Liberté, journal des arts* no. 8 (September 1832): p. 116.

⁴¹ Neil McWilliam, *Dreams of Happiness: Social Art and the French Left, 1830-1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 293.

A nous donc tous nos frères, pour cette grande œuvre de démolition car il y va de la vie.”⁴² This last phrase – “il y va de la vie” – is operative: “De l’anarchie où nous voulons qu’ils passent, les arts sortiront comme d’un creuset, épurés de l’alliage corrosif des préjugés, des traditions d’écoles et des concessions aux modes éphémères de nos jours, sans veille et sans lendemain.”⁴³ The “rien” with which Jeanron’s artist responds to his dismissive interlocutors – stubborn positivists who regard it merely as uncontrolled fantasy – therefore bespeaks no reckless iconoclasm, no wanton destruction for its own sake, no glib cynicism bound, despite itself, to the status quo it takes as its enemy. It is, on the contrary, exuberant and youthful; it insists on freeing up space without occupying it, on fresh air cleansed of the stench of formaldehyde.⁴⁴

“Nothing,” in a word, promises “life.” It is but a promise, however; it does not pretend to be its fulfillment. Liberation, which begins for Jeanron with the obliteration of cultural orthodoxies and, thereby, the inequalities they codify, produces the conditions of freedom. Yet for “life” to emerge from the ruins of the administered world – that is, for liberation to accede to freedom and, in turn, cultural renewal – emancipatory acts of destruction like the ones Jeanron advocates must be total – “il nous faut table rase” – and reflexive.⁴⁵ Destruction, as Jeanron understands it, need not be instrumental; his only concrete goal is to annihilate the Academy root and branch. Like Walter Benjamin’s “destructive character,” he desires a “complete reduction.”⁴⁶

“Mort à l’Institut! Mort au professorat!” The battle cry recurs at regular intervals throughout *La Liberté*’s nineteen issues. Over the course of its six-month run (August 1832-February 1833), *La Liberté*’s stable of artists, writers, and historians developed and maintained a critical language exceptional, at the time, for its militancy and anarcho-collectivist orientation.⁴⁷ Together, the journal’s principle contributors – Jeanron, Laviron, Galbaccio, Borel, Duseigneur, Adolphe-Napoléon Didron, and Jean-Barthélémy Hauréau – shared not only an entrenched antipathy to the State and its cultural institutions – to their corporatism, their system of privileges, their base egoism, their fetish for “reputations” – but also to the impoverished formalism they championed and because of which the arts remained indifferent to, even at odds with, the present conditions of life and production.⁴⁸ *La Liberté* demanded a socially practicable art – that is, an art that stood in direct relation to actual life-processes, an art, therefore, whose truth content, whose social truth, was realized in moments of exchange between artist and nature.⁴⁹ Only by returning art to life and, in turn, life to art might art fulfill its social role and, consequently, assume its proper position at the head of “le mouvement social.” Theirs, in

⁴² Jeanron, “De l’anarchie dans les arts (2e article),” *La Liberté, journal des arts* no. 11 (November 1832): p. 166.

⁴³ Jeanron, “De l’anarchie dans les arts (premier article),” p. 115.

⁴⁴ Jeanron, “De l’anarchie dans les arts (premier article),” p. 117.

⁴⁵ Jeanron, “De l’anarchie dans les arts (premier article),” p. 115.

⁴⁶ Benjamin, “The Destructive Character,” p. 541.

⁴⁷ See Anthony Glinoe, “À la lisière de l’avant-garde esthétique: *La Liberté, journal des arts*,” in *Romantismes, l’esthétisme en acte*, ed. Jean-Louis Cabanès (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris ouest, 2009), pp. 213-226.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Hauréau, “De la politique et des arts,” *La Liberté, journal des arts* no. 1 (August 1832): pp. 26-30; Jules Raimbaud, “Union et Liberté,” *La Liberté, journal des arts* no. 2 (August 1832): pp. 13-16; and Pétrus Borel, “Exposition, Galerie Colbert. Au bénéfice des indigènes,” *La Liberté, journal des arts* no. 1 (August 1832): pp. 30-32.

⁴⁹ On *La Liberté* and the politics of naturalism in the early ‘30s, see McWilliam, pp. 289-302.

short, was an aesthetic crusade against society – against the *mensonge social* – in which art was to be agent more than instrument.⁵⁰ “Non, non, notre colère est implacable! Ce n’est point un tournoi, ce n’est point un duel qui se terminera par une poignée de main et une salade; c’est une guerre à mort? *Vae victis!*”⁵¹ Despite their forthrightness, however, despite the militant posture they adopted – their attacks were always frontal and never anonymous – the end toward which *La Liberté*’s contributors imagined themselves working remained, perhaps of necessity, unpronounced. No *vivats* counteract the *à bas* or *mort à* that flavors *La Liberté* from beginning to end; no positive standard is invoked. For these men, “liberty” – progress – needed to be conceived of negatively. *Anarchie et destruction*: these were *La Liberté*’s only principles.

La Liberté’s rhetoric is programmatic, its denunciations vigorous and uncompromising; however, nothing like a program – fixed, static, inflexible – emerges from its pages. Indeed, *La Liberté* considered the consolidation of even the most radical of ideas into anything like orthodoxy an unforgivable betrayal: thought had to remain fluid; it had to avoid sedimentation if *actualité* was to remain its proper material. Doctrinal programs were the stuff of politics. Any incursion on artistic independence and creative autonomy – anything, that is, that might constrain perception or circumscribe practice – was considered anathema. Accordingly, *La Liberté* targeted for immediate demolition any and all systems of regulation and legitimation – the Institut first and foremost, but also the *cénacle* and the art press, the reformist *Assemblée des Artistes* and its principle organ, the *Journal des artistes*.⁵² The men of *La Liberté* had no interest in improving value systems already in place; they had no interest in pats on the back or good press;⁵³ they had no interest, as Jeanron put it, in “concessions bâtarde” and “mesquines améliorations.”⁵⁴ They demanded nothing short of the total suspension of traditional culture, of the powers that manufactured it and the laws devised to keep it in place; anything less, in their eyes, made for a sterile practice at best, an “agens du pouvoir” at worst.⁵⁵ Their *revendication* was unconditional: “Nous voulons la liberté sans transaction, sans compromis, sans crainte des chances à venir, même de l’anarchie.”⁵⁶

As Didron’s declaration makes plain, *La Liberté* did not balk at uncertainty, at the diffuse and potentially chaotic state of affairs its call for the liquidation of traditional

⁵⁰ I am borrowing the phrase “mensonge social” from Philothée O’Neddy (Théophile Dondey), a comrade-in-arms particularly close to Borel. See the *avant-propos* to his 1833 collection of poems *Feu et Flamme* (Paris: Éditions des Presses françaises, 1926), p. 3.

⁵¹ Pétrus Borel, “Bruit que ces messieurs font courir,” *La Liberté, journal des arts* no. 2 (September 1832): p. 9.

⁵² Jeanron et al. were supportive participants at the first assembly at 9, rue Taitbout on August 23, 1830. By the end of the assembly, however, the 400 artists in attendance had split along political lines – on the one side, the *Classiques*, on the other, the *Romantiques*. The more radical among the *Romantiques*, under Jeanron’s direction, formed the *Société libre des Beaux-Arts*. In an effort to marginalize the *Société*, the *Classiques* – Farcy was one of their leaders – adopted the same name. Jeanron’s *Société* would go on to launch *La Liberté*. For a fuller history, see Rousseau, *La Vie et l’œuvre de Philippe-Auguste Jeanron*, pp. 35-42.

⁵³ See Laviron, “De ceux à qui notre allure ne convient pas,” *La Liberté, journal des arts* no. 6 (September 1832): pp. 90-93.

⁵⁴ Jeanron, “De l’anarchie dans les arts (premier article),” p. 114.

⁵⁵ Adolphe-Napoléon Didron, Prospectus for *La Liberté, journal des arts*, 1832.

⁵⁶ Didron, “Aux artistes,” *La Liberté, journal des arts* no. 1 (August 1832): p. 19.

culture opened on to. That kind of disintegration rang truer to *La Liberté* – truer, that is, to the concept of freedom it tried to articulate and the relationship it tried to establish between freedom and history – than formalizing attempts to counteract (even “preserve”) it. Divorced from present struggles, evocations of the past – whether imagined as means of escape or as means of control simply begged the question – had little purchase for a society making its own history. “Quand la société est ébranlée jusque dans ses fondements,” Laviro writes in his ironically titled “Progrès de nos doctrines,”

Quand l’éméute roule en hurlant dans les rues et sur les places; quand les balles sifflent, et que le canon gronde; quand les passions politiques jonchent les rues de cadavres, vous ne trouvez rien de mieux que de raconter à des gens qui ont encore la saveur de la poudre à la bouche et le bruit du tocsin aux oreilles, quelque insignifiante chronique du temps passé, et faute d’y pouvoir mettre de l’intérêt, vous essayez de piquer la curiosité en exagérant quelques atroces détails. Et vous avez l’effronterie de vous plaindre de l’indifférence du public!

Non, l’art n’est pas là. Votre poésie ne va pas au cœur: elle s’arrête aux yeux, parce que vous ne faites que de la forme.⁵⁷

The present “system” – indeed, “toute espèce d’organisation dans les arts”⁵⁸ – was the enemy not only because it was unjust or because its legitimacy hinged on the maintenance of privilege or because privilege was its reward for passive obedience, but because of the ambivalence in which order and violence then stood opposed to one another, and because it considered art’s mandate to rise above human conditions in their restricted nature consistent with art’s social value. If art was to be “national, actuel, social,” a slogan as prominent in the pages of *La Liberté* as any other, it had to understand human conditions – unvarnished, unsublimated, fractious – as its necessary substance; it had to allow form to respond to them, to be mediated by them. The work of art, as such, would be individual, anti-systematic, negative, the form it eventually took justified by its specific and spontaneous content. Otherwise, art could claim to be nothing more than a mere semblance of the society whose truth it was supposed to express; otherwise, there was only inert, abstract form.

Violence for violence, then: *La Liberté* figured it could rob the present order of its ideological justification and, in so doing, root out its own condition. The destruction it advocated therefore had an ethical as well as aesthetic dimension: it affirmed one’s situatedness, one’s being in and of a particular time and place and one’s responsibility to them. What *La Liberté* opposed, after all, was not the living content of tradition, but its embalming – that is to say, its appropriation and reification, its transfiguration into so

⁵⁷ Laviro, “Progrès de nos doctrines,” p. 135.

⁵⁸ Laviro and Galbaccio, *Salon de 1833*, p. 28.

many cultural goods, and its transmission as so many inviolable values.⁵⁹ The appropriation of the art of the past as a medium for accepted truths in the present: this was the spell that had to be broken; this was the sense of art's purposefulness that prohibited art from discovering its situation, from being in rather than reproducing the present. The point, of course, is not that *La Liberté* sought to free art from purposefulness altogether; the journal did not subscribe, as it were, to the anti-utilitarian credo Gautier was then developing.⁶⁰ *L'art pour l'art* brought art no closer to its "but véritable" than instrumentalization. As should be clear by now, *La Liberté* was committed; it believed art was a form of commitment, and that it was art's committedness that had to be actualized. What needed to be eradicated was the received understanding of art's utility, inseparable as it had become from the egoism and mercantilism of the present order.

"Commitment" (*engagement*), it should be noted, is not *La Liberté*'s word. The journal's writers speak, rather, of art's "social tendency" (*la tendance sociale de l'art*). My substitution, albeit deliberate, is not intended to suggest that *La Liberté* misrecognized its own project, or that it ought to have used the one instead of the other; I wish simply to allay the suspicions we might have, especially after Adorno, of the latter term. "Tendency" and its correlative, "tendentiousness," do not align in the pages of *La Liberté*, although I have little doubt that the journal's political brethren – Godefroy Cavaignac, for instance, or Etienne Arago, or the Neo-Jacobins of the *Société des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* – would have liked them to.⁶¹ In *La Liberté*, "tendency" and "tendentiousness" are antithetical, the one an expression of art's being in a situation – always provisional, always historical – the other an affirmative action operating, often despite itself, under false pretenses. Where the one re-imagines the relationship of the work of art to the world from which it comes and onto which it opens, the other re-functions it; where the one aspires to work at the level of fundamental attitudes, the other intends to generate ameliorative measures and to codify alternative practices, which become themselves interchangeable. Where the one resists the course of the world, defies the prevailing conditions of artistic production, and ought, therefore, to be understood as pure means – "il nous faut table rase" – the other takes its orientation from presumptive ends. Where the latter instructs, is didactic and propagandistic, and consequently makes politics into an object for consumption, the former provokes, astonishes, even alienates. Where the latter abstains from calling its own existence into question, the former obliterates even the traces of its own destruction. The latter looks to the future, the former insists on the here and now. *Destruction et anarchie*: "Fait un art national," Jeanron exhorts young artists, "...et pour le faire ne respectez rien de ce qui vous en empêche."⁶² Make way! The slogan exemplifies what *La Liberté* considered the social tendency of art in its proper sense: it sees nothing permanent.

⁵⁹ Didron, "Untitled," *La Liberté, journal des arts* no. 1 (August 1832): pp. 5-9; see also Borel, "Bruit que ces messieurs font courir," p. 9.

⁶⁰ Gautier began writing *Mademoiselle de Maupin* in the fall of 1833 and published its famous preface in 1834.

⁶¹ See, for instance, Godefroy Cavaignac, "Monumens Révolutionnaires," *Revue républicaine* vol. 3 (November 1834): pp. 129-175, and Etienne Arago, "La République et les artistes," *Revue républicaine* vol. 2 (July 1834): pp. 14-29.

⁶² Jeanron, "De l'anarchie dans les arts (2e article), p. 167.

Looked at from this angle, “tendency” takes on a provisional quality distinct from its customary usage. It also comes to indicate, contra academic precept, an interactive relationship between the form of a work of art and its content, between the work of art itself and the social world in which it discovers its material. The question for *La Liberté*, therefore, was not one of freely made choices, or at least of free choice as an abstract authority that superseded its own determinations. The possibility of choosing, these men knew well, depended on what could be chosen within given historical circumstances. The mediations were the matter; they became the measure of an artist’s transactions with the material he engaged. Put in slightly different terms, *La Liberté* did not presuppose a free for itself, transcendent and unopposed, freedom, as it were, in an unfree world: “Il serait bien étonnant...que Juillet ait voulu nous faire une atmosphère de pure liberté à tous.”⁶³ *La Liberté*’s was an aesthetics and politics of negation, not refusal. If the journal presumed anything it was its own inevitable negation as the fulfillment of its ideal of freedom – “rien, notre génération au moins.” Arguably, *La Liberté*’s valuation of impermanence – its equation of *actualité* with truth – constituted its most incisive critique of bourgeois reason, and of the universalizing image the bourgeois propagated of himself. What was needed, then, were not works of art whose prerogative was to reconcile the contradictions of the social world and thus transcend its restrictedness, but works of art that re-formed it and were thus inconsistent with it. Their inconsistency would become the motor driving them beyond their fallible form.⁶⁴

The precise nature of Préault’s contribution to the publication of *La Liberté*, or to the elaboration of the journal’s core ideas, remains unclear. None of the journal’s articles bears his signature; and as far as we know, he did not sit on the journal’s *comité*.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Théophile Thoré, in 1837, could consider the depth of Préault’s influence certain enough to attribute him a formative role in both the journal’s conception and its realization. Along with Galbaccio and Jeanron, Thoré tells us, Préault was “de cette jeune et audacieuse phalange qui, après juillet, s’imagina que l’art allait conquérir *la Liberté*.” “Ils publièrent sous ce titre,” he continues, “une revue dont la vie fut courte, mais éclatante.”⁶⁶ I see no reason to question the accuracy of Thoré’s remarks; but neither do I wish to inflate their importance. They are cursory statements made in retrospect, and part way through a review of Galbaccio’s design for the rotunda of the

⁶³ Didron, “Untitled,” p. 5.

⁶⁴ My understanding of what *La Liberté* meant by “the social tendency of art” has benefited greatly from a handful of sources: Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1984); Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings volume 2, part 2, 1931-1934*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005), pp. 768-782; Theodor Adorno, “Commitment,” *New Left Review* 87-88 (September-December 1974): pp. 75-89. *La Liberté*’s view is, of course, its own – it is very much of the period – and I do not mean to suggest otherwise. The books and essays listed here simply helped me to ask certain questions.

⁶⁵ According to Sylvain Bellenger, Préault was thought to have been behind many of Hauréau’s articles (“Ce gaillard-là, avec une mèche de cheveux, vous fait une forêt vierge!” in *Auguste Préault: sculpteur romantique*, p. 91). Much as I would like to make a point of this, I have yet to find evidence one way or the other.

⁶⁶ Thoré, “Ouverture du Casino-Paganini,” *Le Siècle*, November 28, 1837.

freshly opened Casino-Paganini. Galbaccio is Thoré's concern, in other words, as well as the architect's tireless struggle against "les vieilles routines." Préault and Jeanron appear to give flesh to Thoré's evaluation of Galbaccio's work and to round out an appraisal of Galbaccio's impact on both the practice and theory of art; they are the painter and the sculptor, as it were, to the architect and theorist, complementary signs of a total program for the emancipation of art and the revaluation of its *raison d'être*. Thoré's comments assure us, all the same, that Préault's absence from *La Liberté*'s list of authors makes for a decidedly poor measure of his involvement.

Over the course of his career, Préault took part in a variety of publishing ventures. In addition to *La Liberté*, his biographers have mentioned, among others, *Le Musée* and Hugo's *L'Événement*, which, shortly after the appearance of its first issue, Préault disparaged for belatedly espousing the "romantisme de 1848"; the June Days ensured that the journal would be stillborn, not only compromised, but compromising.⁶⁷ Préault has even been attached to Charles Blanc's *Gazette des beaux-arts*.⁶⁸ His forays in journalism never bore much fruit, however. He succeeded in publishing only two short articles, both in 1856 and both in *Renaissance*, a short-lived monthly edited by Alfred Dumesnil, Ernest Morin, and Eugène Noël.⁶⁹ The two articles – the first is titled "Le statuaire moderne," the second "L'architecture du siècle" – confirm much of what we have been told about Préault's manner of speech: they are fast-paced, unsystematic, and paratactic, disjunctive collections of epigrammatic statements and incisive turns of phrase. Both, moreover, exhibit a polemical rhetoric comparable to *La Liberté*'s, but reworked, I might say updated. By 1856, the resolute indignation Préault once felt had come to be mediated by a sense of despair, defeat, even failure. Take, for example, "L'architecture du siècle," an acerbic history of 19th-century architectural practice and inspired by the preemptive eviction of his *Sainte Valère* from the grounds of Sainte-Clotilde. Critical of fetishistic revivals, the extravagances of wealth, and the pragmatism of Capital in equal measure – the choices, in 1856, seem to have been whittled down to "le nouveau gothique" ("joujoux en moellons, ou grandes volières peinturlurées à l'intérieur") or "les gares des chemins de fer" – Préault phrases his central question thus:

Quel est l'architecte de génie qui viendra réaliser l'idée moderne, en faisant une architecture appropriée à notre climat, à notre tempérament, à nos idées, à notre foi nouvelle, avec les matériaux de notre pays?
Ce ne sera point cet homme d'affaires, ce coureur de salons, cet intrigant d'antichambre, ce mâçon.
L'époque se cherche.
Le grand architecte au cœur chaud, au cerveau vaste, qui la résumera, n'est pas encore venu.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Préault expressed his disdain in a letter dated August 5, 1848 and addressed to Gautier. Quoted in Charles W. Millard, "La vie d'Auguste Préault," in *Auguste Préault: sculpteur romantique, 1809-1879*, p. 47.

⁶⁸ On Préault's journalism, see Millard, pp. 47-48.

⁶⁹ A third article, "Revue des Salons," published anonymously in *Renaissance* on May 1, 1856, may also be Préault's – it has all of the ingredients of the other two – but we cannot attribute it to him with certainty.

⁷⁰ Préault, "L'architecture du siècle," *Renaissance* (March 1, 1856): p. 4.

Or “Le statuaire moderne”: ostensibly a collective obituary for James Pradier, François Rude, and David d’Angers, whose deaths followed one another in quick succession between 1852 and 1856, the article reads like a requiem for modern sculpture itself. Préault’s tributes, despite their brevity, are filled with strange, often irreverent turns, each of them tearing down the monument it simultaneously constructs: Pradier, who had the hands of a sculptor but never the head, set out every morning for Athens only to find himself, by day’s end, in the rue de Bréda; Rude, whose superior honesty precluded “génie,” made prose out of art; and David d’Angers, forever caught between “la grande inquiétude moderne” and the Academy, was unquestionably the century’s greatest sculptor, but his sculpture, always burdened by a concern for “indemnité,” could not claim the equivalent honor.⁷¹ These tributes, to be sure, have a playfulness to them; and if we underestimate the valency of this quality, we mistake the article’s timbre, never mind the poignancy of its conclusion. Of course we do no better if we fail to recognize the distressed earnestness that underlies them. An acute sense that Pradier, Rude, and David have left behind them a blighted wasteland of second- and third-raters haunts kind and unkind word alike. These tributes simply cannot shake their author’s ambivalence. The obituary closes on a dissonant note, five disjointed lines that constitute the article’s final assessment of modern sculpture in 1856 and its possible future:

Le Gouvernement a fait noblement appel à tous les
sculpteurs pour décorer le nouveau Louvre. Il leur a donné
la pierre et de l’or;
Pour programme, toutes les gloires de la France.
A l’œuvre, Messieurs, montrez ce que vous avez dans le
ventre.
Il en résulté cent magots.
Sont-ce là nos artistes? Cerveaux irrésolus et fanfarons! Si
vous voulez sauver les arts, supprimez-les pour cinq ans.⁷²

This was 1856, four years into the Second Empire and at a time, it seems, when Préault felt pressed to reevaluate his confidence in art’s capacity to fulfill its *promesse de bonheur*. His tone, indeed, bespeaks an “unhappy consciousness.” I want to be clear, however: my point, all along, has not been to crystallize a set of associations, or to establish an exact equivalence between *La Liberté* and *Tuerie*. To claim such an identity would betray the anti-systematic and destructive impetus of both projects; moreover, it would betray a postulate they both took to heart: that the social tendency of a work of art necessarily included an artistic tendency and, correlatively, that social tendency and artistic quality had to be in accord. Neither one nor the other could be separated from “actualité,” from the moment of making, or from the situation that determined it. Laviron and Galbaccio, in their *Salon de 1833*, put it this way:

L’actualité et la tendance sociale de l’art sont les choses
dont nous nous inquiétons le plus; ensuite vient la vérité de

⁷¹ Préault, “La statuaire moderne,” *Renaissance* (February 1, 1856): p. 4.

⁷² Préault, “La statuaire moderne,” p. 4.

représentation et l'habileté plus ou moins grande d'exécution matérielle. Nous demandons avant toute autre chose l'actualité, parce que nous voulons qu'il agisse sur la société et qu'il la pousse au progrès; nous lui demandons la vérité, parce qu'il faut qu'il soit vivant pour être compris.⁷³

The formulation issues no prescriptions; it describes “principes,” which the two then go on to activate in their assessment of Jeanron’s *Scène de Paris* (fig. 20) and Préault’s *Mendicité*. Of *Scène de Paris*: favorably disposed though Laviron and Galbaccio are to the picture’s “poignant” subject – the “angoisses” of working-class poverty and the courage with which they are endured – which they find irreproachable, “bien pensé,” they nevertheless come down hard on Jeanron’s execution – “l’exécution surtout” – because it does not follow “la pensée.”⁷⁴ Of *Mendicité*: “sujet tout empreint d’un caractère local, où se remarquent des contrastes de pose et de physionomie rendus avec un bonheur inouï de *faire* et de composition, c’est une scène pathétique d’un drame de la faim, dont tous les personnages souffrent et font parler leur douleur.” “M. Préault,” they conclude, “prend rang distingué parmi les sculpteurs qui comprennent l’art dans son but véritable.”⁷⁵ If Laviron and Galbaccio consider the concordance between social tendency and artistic tendency in the work of art necessary to any claim art may lay to truth, they nevertheless subordinate one to the other: execution “follows” idea. Representation, for them, remains art’s priority; it is the role of representation, understood as both process and image, to perform the necessary mediations between art and the social world. The comparison above is instructive, then, because of the emphasis Laviron and Galbaccio place on artistic technique. What, for them, distinguishes *Mendicité* from *Scène de Paris* is not the idea driving it – indeed, the idea of both works is more or less the same – but the progressiveness of the artistic technique with which Préault realizes it. Jeanron represents the deprivations of poverty and the suffering of “prolétaires”; he identifies these conditions as distinctly modern, an injustice of the present order of things and its adherence to the “loi de privilège.” Préault gives the experience of these conditions a new form; he makes them speak (“font parler”).

Unfortunately, *Mendicité* no longer exists; like too many of his other works in plaster, Préault destroyed it at some point. It is thought, nonetheless, to have borne a striking resemblance to *Tuerie*. Indeed, so manifestly were the two reliefs aligned that Gautier, in his review of *Tuerie*, invokes *Mendicité* to help his readers visualize the later work’s formal disobedience and technical difference.⁷⁶ In the same vein, Laviron recalls *Mendicité* in conjunction with a mock toast to the on-going incompetence of the Institut; for a second year, he boasts, it has failed to curb the rise of an artist who breaks so completely with “les traditions des écoles.”⁷⁷ Of course we shall never know for certain how to read the relationship between the two reliefs; we shall never know what the relationship looked like. I take the two references, regardless, to have been written less

⁷³ Laviron and Galbaccio, *Salon de 1833*, p. 30.

⁷⁴ Laviron and Galbaccio, *Salon de 1833*, pp. 256-257.

⁷⁵ Laviron and Galbaccio, *Salon de 1833*, pp. 40-41.

⁷⁶ Gautier, “Salon de 1834,” *La France industrielle* (April 1834): p. 22.

⁷⁷ Laviron, *Salon de 1834* (Paris, 1834), p. 162.

as measures of strict continuity than as attempts to affirm the centrality of artistic technique in Préault's practice; to miss its import is to miss the work itself.

It is the determinate quality of artistic technique that, I believe, Ribner ultimately misdiagnoses. For him, *Tuerie* functions much like caricature, even if it does not share caricature's directness; politics happens, implicitly, in *Tuerie*'s thematic and formal reversals. He refrains, however, from pushing beyond a politics of revision. Indeed, the site of *Tuerie*'s negation, for Ribner, is singular; it is a matter of duplicitous signs and hypocritical messages, of *representation*. In turn, he assigns a tendentious political meaning to what I take to be, at root, a social proposition. The question, I agree, is about reversals; we must address them, however, in materialist terms. If we do, we restore to these reversals the dynamic instability that makes them destructive rather than revisionist. If we do, we see them for the work they do as part of a radical revaluation not only of sculpture's purview, but of sculptural practice. For the relief's reversals, I am suggesting, envision a repossession of the means of artistic production.

Killing, in *Tuerie*, takes the form of the struggle to which it gives rise, and struggle, as Préault conceives it, is determined by incoherence and illogicality. Or rather, and this may get closer to Préault's point, struggle – in particular, violent struggle – produces them. It disorients; it unfixes; it rends; it transgresses. Its articulations are also disarticulations, bodies torn asunder and ruthlessly crammed into compressed spaces. Such extreme physical conditions, which subject bodies both to external and internal pressures, generate conflict in bodies themselves; and once a body ceases to be capable of containing the internal pressures violence inflicts on it, it becomes contorted; the internal erupts and fractures it. Expressions of violence are not limited, however, to outward signs of grief, aggression, and agony. Violence in *Tuerie* – the violence of *Tuerie* – is structural as much as it is figurative, and that structural violence erupts where Préault's commitment to figuration runs up against the relief's spatial contractions – that is, where the relief's highly articulated figures lose their capacity to circulate freely within the space allotted them. It appears almost as if they were fighting for a space which is not there for all of them.

Tuerie's figures are sharply delineated, yet they are rendered all the more acute by the abrupt shifts between deep shadow and projection located at the points where bodies meet.⁷⁸ There is, as it were, a kind of syncopation within the relief's centrifugal swirl. Taken individually, these shifts appear instrumental: each figure emerges from the relief as if carved-out, as if *Tuerie* were a collection of discrete, volumetric bodies each of which occupies a space determined by his or her own becoming, a space in which he or she might twist and turn and react to incursions on that space. As I said, Préault cares about the expressiveness of individual bodies, about how bodies respond to violence each in its own way. Yet *Tuerie*'s space is singular; the division of planes required of relief sculpture if it is to provide the illusion that its figures inhabit a notional space open to circulation – a human world – simply is not there. Instead, Préault squeezes out all signs of space and spatial recession, of perspective and coordinated proportion and rational

⁷⁸ Philippe Arnaud, "Une Tuerie d'Antoine Augustin dit Auguste Préault (1809-1879)," *L'Estampille* (1989): p. 92.

distribution; he rids the relief of neutral intervals, jamming the interstices in the figure-action with emphatic patterning – coarsely textured passages of bronze that assert themselves as positive rather than negative values, materially present but never leading on to the world of things, serpentine locks of hair, a fixating repetition of hands. The relief's dynamism, in turn, appears pressurized; and *Tuerie*'s syncopations, instead of carrying out their form-affirming work, become, rather, fissures in a single mass pulled this way and that. They are signs of separation and merger, tears in a unity, to which, however, they cannot add up.

Préault's treatment of the body engaged in violent struggle drives traditional form into crisis. According to the normative principles of sculpture propounded by the Institut, the duty of sculpture is to maintain the body as a stable whole, even to guarantee that it remain so. Which is not to say, of course, that for the Institut and the Classicism it advocated sculpture needed to neutralize the body's responsiveness to affective stimuli; the goal of sculpture, rather, was to ensure that the tension between exterior – the delimiting surface – and interior – the contingency of experience and feeling – remained static, that the former, as it were, contained the latter or at least kept it in check. Value, virtue, beauty – *Art* – lay there, in harmonious syntheses, in the primacy of abstract totalities, in the paradoxical way in which confinement assured autonomy. Préault casts light on the dark side of traditional form – its artificiality, *its* violence – not only by setting this tension back in motion, but by allowing it, and the opposition Classicism dissimulates beneath a veil of unitary form, to tear the body into pieces. The meaning-making elements of form in *Tuerie* assert themselves, in other words, by critically dissolving those formal elements in which meaning is supposed to exist as a positive fact.

In *Tuerie*, then, Préault refuses to demand of violence that it be made to conform to the expectations of his art. Instead, he treats violence violently, forcing his materials into conflict, on the one hand, with the conventions – and institutional frameworks – meant to regulate them and, on the other, with the bodies to which they give shape. *Tuerie*, indeed, turns on the sense of unease it elicits: the relief does not seem to give form to the bodies broiling beneath its surface as much as those bodies give form to the relief, as if the material surface of *Tuerie* were a barrier up against which these bodies push. To put it another way: Préault activates the structural relationship between figure and surface, the one testing the resilience and resistance of the other. Partly this is an effect of the relief's collapsed planes and the resulting de-differentiation of ground. But if Préault eliminates ground, he also eliminates air. Air cannot circulate in *Tuerie*, cut off as it is by the tumult's forward push and the non-porous surface of bronze. The surface suffocates. The black figure's gritting teeth, the woman's clamorous wail, and the guttural wheeze of the man at upper right who, undeterred, charges headlong into the dismembered hand that strangles him produce no audible sound; and the man at lower right, with his head thrown back, does not so much exhale his final breath as gasp to make it possible, his diaphragm straining, his chest taut. Airlessness turns these expressions of violence endured into *grimaces* – distorted, deformed, mute. Surface in *Tuerie* is no kinder than purveyors of violence; it is as oppressive – as fatal – as they.

Medium and space consequently become difficult to pry apart. So, too, do medium and figure. Just now I tried to describe the paradoxical way in which the sounds of violent conflict are stifled by *Tuerie*'s overbearing material pressures. I need to adjust the claim. The relief is not silent. Where I imagine sound being produced, however, is

not in howls or colliding bodies or death rattles or gnashing teeth – *grimaces* communicate by other means – but in the shrill shriek of the sculptor’s knife penetrating metal and slicing through it. I am referring, of course, to the two gashes that mark the waxen breast of the man at lower right. There is something profoundly unsettling about these wounds, about the way metal peeled back to collect in thick, irregular knots before drying; it is as if these wounds, or at least their contours, have been cauterized, sealed at their edges but leaving the crevasses themselves bare and open. The incisions, surgical in the precision of their lines, form black, dry voids. Préault skips the rivulets of blood that usually accompany wounds of this sort; he pushes their violence beyond representation, beyond metaphor. These wounds are dug, literally, into the relief’s surface.

When in the sculptural process these incisions appeared is open to question. I suspect, however, that Préault had to have produced them subsequent to casting. The bronze dates from 1850; in 1834 *Tuerie* was plaster, and that work no longer exists. All that remains of the plaster is a lithograph by Jean Gigoux (fig. 21), which Laviron published as a supplement to his *Salon de 1834*. To be sure, Gigoux translates *Tuerie*’s frenzied activity with tremendous force; yet if he gets the dynamic quality of *Tuerie* right – if, that is, he makes clear what is least sculptural about the relief – he seems never quite to have found an adequate pictorial solution for Préault’s contraction of space. Gigoux’s bodies occupy clearly defined positions in space and in relation to one another. His shadows do their customary work too well, too consistently; they give us a sense of integrated form rather than pitting the salience of form against a common space too condensed for the seven figures who struggle to appropriate it. When looking at Gigoux’s lithograph, we do not wonder about the notional distance between, say, the woman at center and the *chevalier*, who, cast in even shadow, retreats into some other space behind the figures in the foreground; nor do we wonder about the relationship between the black figure and the women whose flowing mane he seizes with what, I believe we can now say with some certainty, is his right hand. By giving greater relief to her head, which we now read as being pulled downward and outward rather than downward and sideways, Gigoux provides us with a sense of bodies twisting in space, which allows us in turn to imagine how these bodies work as whole bodies. He gets closer to the wounded man, whose head now falls backward into the picture space, his face occluded by the crest of his upturned chin. To achieve this effect, however, Gigoux relied on the permissible ambiguities of perspectival drawing. Arguably, Gigoux’s wounded man endures a crueler form of violence than Préault’s, his suffering translated into unnatural stiffness and erasure. That stiffness is not Préault’s; his wounded man languishes, the weight of his body registered not by a neck pulled taut after it has lost its capacity to resist gravity’s inexorable force but by two bodies – one full of vitality, the other near death – coming into contact. The contact – between thumb and breast – is intimate and affective; here, Préault seems to say, is what it is like when bodies touch one another as a condition of life and death. Gigoux’s *Tuerie*, then, describes this tumultuous crowd as a coherent collection of individuated bodies, a crowd as it comes together during moments of conflict. However violent mass formation may be for Gigoux, death comes, ultimately, at the hands of others. Gigoux’s crowd describes a human space. Préault’s is pressed together by the sheer force of its wild activity; it is a crush; it slaughters. I could go on, but my point, by now, should be clear: Gigoux clarifies too much; he resolves too much. We learn more, that is, from the lithograph’s elisions,

exaggerations, and failures – its attempt at synthesis – than from what it gets right. Are we, then, to take the absence of wounds in Gigoux’s lithograph as deliberate omission? As an oversight? I find it hard to believe that Gigoux would have excluded the wounds had they been there in 1834, even if their indexicality had been difficult to translate into pictorial form. Laviron makes no mention of them either. Indeed, not a single critic from 1834 mentions them.

Whether the wounds date from 1850 or 1834 does not matter much. I take them, regardless, as clarifications, sites at which the relief’s various forms of violence coincide. The wounds need not be there, in other words; the questions they raise are already present in the relief itself: in the violence of its anti-classicism, in the way it overturns aesthetic laws as received laws and gives them new material and formal expression; but also in its destructive character, in its lawlessness, in its refusal to reassemble the ruins of its administered world. The wounds actualize these actions and those impulses; they render them indelibly present, the irremediable result of the coefficient of friction in the work itself. The wounds, I am suggesting, have a timeliness to them. If their date of origin eludes us, that indeterminability does not cloud their broader implications; it enriches them. Undatable, the wounds become indices of exact and defiant gestures performed in time, yet in a time we cannot grasp as continuous or homogeneous; we cannot understand them in terms of strict causality. They exist, rather, as eruptions, disjunctions, and wreckage. Put differently, the wounds give vent to the desultory and irreconcilable in *Tuerie*, to its incongruous temporalities and illogical spatialities; at the same time, however, they confront us with their own – indeed, with sculpture’s – material enactment. They are the matter of technique, of technique as factual and, as such, disruptive. The wounds appear, then, as figures of dissonance; they are signs of discomposure in the making.

To sum up: with *Tuerie* Préault takes the impulse to violence coded in traditional form, turns that impulse back upon that form, and liquidates it. He refrains, however, from appropriating it, from issuing a new standard. Rather, he pushes the integrated form of Classical sculpture to its extreme, which results in disintegration; he thereby demystifies traditional form by demonstrating that its laws and the normative culture they safeguard are neither natural nor timeless. “Rien”: Préault shares Jeanron’s thirst for a complete reduction; he shares his distrust of permanence and totality. For neither, however, is “rien” an expression of hopelessness; it does not assert itself against the social; it is not nihilistic. “L’anarchie est l’inévitable prologue.”⁷⁹ Préault and Jeanron see mobility and renewal – they see an open way; they see possibility; they see a new process of transmission – in the absence they create. For them, in other words, absence does not indicate a lack of fulfillment, but unfulfillability; it makes the unfulfillable matter, as critique but also as promise, the promise of nothing. Absence, as such, gives way to the particular, to the negative force of the actual, to the individual at odds with the social totality: it enables freedom. “La vie: ce fut le don de l’art de Préault.”⁸⁰ When Préault turned to the fragment in 1834, he did so, then, because he considered it the only truthful form: “son art est inquiet, agité, ardent, inachevé, comme son siècle.”⁸¹ He hoped to redeem art by destroying the concept of Art.

⁷⁹ Jeanron, “De l’anarchie dans les arts (premier article),” p. 113.

⁸⁰ Ernest Chesneau, “Auguste Préault,” *L’Art* vol. 27, no. 2 (1879): p. 13.

⁸¹ Bataille, p. 2.

“Je ne suis Pas/Pour le fini/Je suis Pour l’infini.” Préault scrawled these three lines beneath a sketch of the commemorative medallion he modeled of Eugène Delacroix in 1864 (fig. 22), the year after the painter’s death. Punctuated by capitalized *js* and *ps* – “Je,” “Pas,” “Pour” – rather than caesural commas and terminal periods, the lines have the emphatic cadence and tachygraphic concision of a slogan; on the page, however, they take on the melancholy appearance of an epitaph. Like the articles Préault published in 1856, these phrases have an ambiguous affect. They profess a conviction of long-standing – Préault could easily have written them in 1830, 1832, 1834, or even in the first few months of 1848 – as an expression of bereavement, in defiance, as it were, of the death they grieve. Loss, it seems, inspired a kind of recursion. Aged despite itself, the refrain accrues a certain poignancy; appended to an image of death, its timbre turns reflective – it shifts keys. The promise it rearticulates remains unmet, its ambition once again foiled.

When Préault composed these lines, he had to have known that he was addressing the generation of 1863 in the language of 1830. Needless to say, by the 1860s this language, quixotic and radical in equal measure, had lost more than a few of its teeth. Modernity had moved on: if the Bourse remained a commanding symbol of the social order, the Crystal Palace, Haussmann’s Paris, the June Days of 1848, and the 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte had given that order a new texture, a new set of images. The Bourgeois had won the day, and the barricade, the one that had given shape and expression to the political and social struggles of the ‘30s and ‘40s, had been buried beneath layers of macadam. In 1864, *La Liberté* and its brand of aesthetic militantism could only have seemed a thing of the past. Modernity had made its language a part of its own logic and reason. I do not mean to question Préault’s sincerity in writing these lines; an aspiration toward “l’infini” did and would continue to propel his practice forward. Nor do I wish to question their appropriateness; indeed, they sit perfectly at ease beneath the image of loss they work to elaborate. In memorializing Delacroix, Préault was, after all, confronting an irresistible form of finality head on. It is no surprise, then, that the mournful retrospection of memorialization would lead him back to the axioms of his youth; belatedness and repetition might have been his only viable defense.

The meaning of the refrain, like nearly all of Préault’s “ironic negations and imperious affirmations,” is unstable. “Fini” oscillates between two possible connotations. On the one hand, it refers to “finish,” and everything that term implies about an artist’s relation to academic practice, the art market, and the means of artistic production. In this first sense, “fini” affirms a positivist criterion, which, nonetheless, consolidates its authority by means of abstraction. It privileges exogenous standards of value over production itself, over the individual work of art which, alienated by a regulated system of artistic labor, could never truly fulfill its own concept. “Fini,” as such, encodes its social meaning. On the other hand, “fini” designates objective, untransgressable limits in time and space – “finitude”; it points up the restrictedness of the human condition. These two aspects of “fini,” of course, complement rather than offset one another and must be read in tandem; for only when they are can we begin to parse Préault’s usage. “Fini” assimilates the historical to the natural; it naturalizes history

and historicizes nature. It marks a place and time where life and possibility wither away. As the measure of an artwork's resolution – of its completedness – “fini” signals “the end,” but an end already – which is to say, arbitrarily – determined. That “fini” is a past participle masquerading as a noun is not without significance. “Fini,” in other words, crystallizes the boundary between the work of art and social life; it encloses the work of art. This process of enclosure, which transfigures individual labor into an object of tradition, reifies the work of art and places it at the disposal of the present; transmission, exchange, and consignment to the wastepaper basket of oblivion become so many means to the same end. Seldom given over to the formalities of surface appearance, “infini” enacts rather than veils its social meaning. It besieges the positivism of its counterpart; it favors the unknown and unknowable over control and mastery; it values what remains absent, unforeseeable, beyond the reach of instrumental reason; it opposes enclosure *tout court*. “Infini” emancipates by dint of its negative force; it wreaks havoc on the enclosed world by blasting ways through it. It is a means without end.

After writing these lines, Préault signed them: “Je ne suis Pas/Pour le fini/Je suis Pour l’infini/Auguste Préault.” Rather than secure the priority of Préault's authorship, however, the signature sabotages it. For even as the signature identifies Préault as the writer of the lines above it, it unmoors them from a homogeneous and autonomous – hence authorial – voice. Whether we are to understand “je” as Préault himself or as Delacroix is unclear. Is Préault proclaiming his own desire, or what he believes to have been Delacroix's? Is he signing the refrain above, the ink drawing as a whole, or both? Or is “je” in fact divided, an identification of self and other, maybe even self as other, both Préault and Delacroix? *Je est un autre*. Préault's critics regularly referred to him as the Delacroix of sculpture: “Préault c'est Delacroix.”⁸² The sketch itself offers us no assurances. Like the lines dashed off below it, the drawing demands that we read two registers at once – in this case, mediums. The drawing invokes two mediums, as it were, but gives priority to neither. Once again, a precise chronology eludes us; the best we can do is date both the drawing and the medallion to 1864. We cannot say for certain, however, which came first. We do not know, in other words, whether the drawing is preparation or reproduction, whether it is drawing in advance of sculpture or drawing after sculpture. Préault signed the medallion in the picture, an indication of its completion, just as he signed the drawing and the refrain below.

In short, we can only comprehend the drawing partly. It cannot entirely sustain the tension of its terms and identities – their simultaneity and parataxis – which in turn fragments the work itself, and precludes us from seeing and reading it as a totality. The drawing, that is, wants to be what it knows it cannot; it wants its parts to resolve, to slide into one another and to form a single identity, but its inclination toward integration dismantles its claim to it. The drawing's fragments, contingent in their particularity, are parts of a totality that, nevertheless, oppose totality. Willy-nilly, then, the drawing, fragmentary in spite of itself, fragmentary because it cannot be otherwise, performs its commemorative function all the more poignantly, all the more punctually. It confesses. The drawing, as such, has something important to say about history and the tense in which Préault would like to see it written and lived. For even as it mourns the past as the

⁸² See Bellanger's catalogue entry on the drawing in *Auguste Préault: sculpteur romantique*, pp. 214-215. The configuration here is Bellanger's synthesis of any number of comparable formulations from the period, several of which Bellanger quotes. By the late '40s, the equation was commonplace.

truth of the present – even, that is, as it highlights failed promises – the drawing contravenes its recursive tendency and its sense of closure; it resists the sedimentation of the preterit – “infini,” it seems to me, proclaims this emphatically. The drawing sits at the point of contact between the past and the present; and because it does, neither the one nor the other is safe. Mourning occurs, here, in the present tense, but also against the present; it fragments. As such, it is allied to the destructive impulse Préault once evinced. Both affirm present situations; and in affirming them, liquidate them. Both open ways.

Préault’s preference for the present tense appears not to have changed over the years. By this, of course, I do not mean that, *mutatis mutandis*, the drawing of 1864 and the relief of 1834 are more or less identical works. The drawing and *Tuerie* respond in their own ways to their own situations, to restrictions specific to those situations, and to the way those situations were being lived and suffered through. Both works, in a word, are historical, and do not pretend to be otherwise; they emerge as part of their history and, as such, in conflict with it. The present tense, for Préault, is a progressive rather than simple or perfect form, which is to say, it is partial and incomplete; it addresses the here and now as it is made, not as a fact to be observed; it sees processes rather than conditions, *Killing* rather than *Slaughter*. In other words, Préault wanted to put human agency back into history, by which I mean the agency of those living through history and the agency of those writing or representing it. No doubt Préault learned a great deal about history and historiography from Jules Michelet, an intimate friend who once prized Préault’s *Gaulois* for its historicity, but also for realizing a truly public style – colossal, commanding, fit for the out-of-doors – in defiance of “public” taste and its predilection for the miniature, for daring, that is, to be “assez grossier, assez peuple.”⁸³ The solid block of stone out of which Préault carved the *Gaulois* remains in evidence,⁸⁴ the sign of an encounter, of history in the making. Préault’s version of the present tense is boldly active; it is always engaged, part and parcel of the “guerre mortelle” he declared “à l’indifférence.”⁸⁵ For Préault, in short, truly historical works show that history has a grain.

“La barricade ferme la rue mais ouvre la voie”: what needs negating must first be affirmed; it must be turned against itself – imperiously, ironically – if it is to be destroyed. Although this slogan comes from May 1968 – I willingly confess to the anachronism – the sentiment it articulates is old; it is Préault’s. Silvestre gets that much right. It is, moreover, the sentiment – the conviction, the way of proceeding – that *Tuerie* and the drawing share. What Préault must have sensed in 1864, then – why, that is, he figured the language of 1830 still had currency three decades later – was that the world, however different it looked, had changed but little; at least it had not changed fundamentally. The individual and society were no closer to reconciliation; the Louvre, the Tuileries, and the Bourse, *c’est-à-dire*, civil society and Capital, continued to stand on firm ground. In 1864, in other words, the fragment could still seem the most truthful form the work of art could take. Resistance in 1864, however, had to be carried out by other means, as re-collection, in a tragic key. Art might not have fulfilled its *promesse de bonheur*; but then, neither had history.

⁸³ Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France au seizième siècle*, vol. 7 (Paris, 1855), pp. 323-324 [note to p. 241].

⁸⁴ Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, pp. 61-62.

⁸⁵ Silvestre, p. 235.

Not long before the Salon opened on March 1, 1834, the July Monarchy initiated its political endgame with the republican opposition. Its primary target was the *Société des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*, a prominent neo-Jacobin association that had emerged in the wake of the June Days of 1832 as a workers' wing to the moribund *Société des Amis du Peuple*. Jeanron and Hauréau, possibly others among *La Liberté's* ranks, were both *sociétaires*. In the summer of 1833, once internal disputes had forced out its moderate sections, the *SDHC* redirected its efforts from propaganda and political education to direct action. The government's first attempt to neutralize the *SDHC* came earlier that year, in April, when it had seven *chefs de série* tried for violating article 291 of the Penal Code, which stipulated that associations of twenty people or more had to obtain prior authorization; four out of the seven *chefs* were convicted, and their sections formally disbanded. Six months later, the Monarchy redoubled its efforts. In December, the government indicted twenty-seven members of the *SDHC* for having plotted an insurrection to coincide with the third anniversary of the July Revolution. The trial, logged as the *Procès des Vingt-Sept*, began on December 11 and dragged out over eleven days. True though the government's allegation might have been, the scarcity of incriminating evidence – July 27, 28, and 29 had all passed without major incident – made it difficult for the prosecution to substantiate the charges. Having to build a case around a potential event – indeed, a non-event – proved no deterrent for the government, however. It figured it had the law on its side: thanks to recent revisions in the Penal Code, conspiracy to overthrow the government itself was a crime; whether anything came of it was inconsequential, circumstantial. In the eyes of the jury, however, the Penal Code alone provided insufficient reason to convict. The trial ended in fiasco. By the 22nd, all but one of the defendants, Jean-Jacques Vignerte, had been acquitted or had charges against them dismissed; unlucky enough to have had his signature appear on a manifesto that the *comité central* of the *SDHC* issued in October and that enshrined the right and duty of insurrection, Vignerte was sentenced to three years in prison. A stalemate, the trial nevertheless brought to light – and no doubt the government considered the public revelation a victory of sorts – that the *SDHC*, riven by factionalism, was losing coherence.⁸⁶

The *Procès des Vingt-Sept* actuated a momentous shift in the political order. Over the course of the next year, the Monarchy introduced a series of legislative measures intended, on the one hand, to neuter the radical opposition and, on the other, to improve conviction rates: an authorization law aimed at colporteurs (so-called mouthpieces of the secret societies among the working classes), a law tightening and expanding restrictions on associations and thus putting an end to the cat-and-mouse game the government had been playing with the republican societies, and a new stamp tax meant to deface and devalue political caricature and thereby limit its circulation; infractions of the first two, henceforth, were to be tried by appointed judges rather than juries. A year and a half later, these measures culminated in the September Laws of 1835 – “the reign of terror

⁸⁶ For a detailed history of the *SDHC* and its to-and-fro with the July Monarchy in 1833 and 1834, see Jill Harsin, *Barricades: The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 65-105.

against ideas,” as Alphonse de Lamartine famously denounced them⁸⁷ – which granted new powers to the president of the *Cour d’assises* and the *procureur général* in cases against defendants accused of participating in rebellion or seditious activity and reintroduced prior censorship for published materials. The July Monarchy was preparing to disown its historical origins once and for all.

Prior to 1835, the Monarchy had little choice but to preserve, in form if not in content, its relationship to the 1830 Revolution. Indeed, sustaining an image of political reconciliation and social harmony was a necessity for the government; its maintenance alone could secure the Monarchy’s claim to legitimacy. At the same time, however, acknowledging this relationship – no matter the form it was given, no matter how it was spun – underscored just how tenuous that claim was and how readily it could be discredited. The threat of dissolution posed by the memory of 1830, especially in those early years, was keenly felt – I need, perhaps, only mention how quickly a rhetoric of betrayal and dispossession (*escamoter* was the preferred verb) came to dominate the discourse of the republican opposition, or the uprising of Lyons’s *canuts* in 1831, the barricades that fortified the Cloître Saint-Merri for two days in June 1832, the *forts détachés* with which Thiers proposed to surround Paris in April 1833, and the revolution that was to take place at the end of July 1833. That this relationship, compelled by politics rather than elective affinities, evinced the tetchy temperament of a cease-fire could not have surprised anyone. Negotiating its terms was, predictably, a delicate and risky business, a matter for the July Monarchy of establishing limits and enforcing boundaries without appearing to do either.

The 1830 Revolution, in short, had to be realized and defused at the same time; it could be commemorated but only insofar as it remained at a proper distance – that is, an object of history, revisable, forgettable, even deniable. Small wonder, then, that the Monarchy bridled when, in July 1833, it looked like the anniversary of the Revolution might turn into an occasion to relive it. The Monarchy had come to the limit of its own reason.

The reconciliation myth that the Monarchy propagated in the early ‘30s was never very convincing; it did not have to be. It was effective, regardless; for it rendered the affirmative image of 1830 unusable, even meaningless, for its enemies on the Left; it transformed commemoration into its opposite, deflated it as a modality on the basis of which counter-images might be generated. Few artists confronted the dilemma facing republican image-makers as directly and regularly as Honoré Daumier, and nowhere more acutely than in his lithograph *Un héros de juillet, Mai 1831* (fig. 23). In the lithograph, a hero of the July Revolution, disabled in the course of action, stands on the balustrade of the Pont de la Concorde, a *pavé* – his “dernière ressource” – tied around his neck like an anchor stone. Perched as if on a pedestal, he recalls the statues that top triumphal columns; the acts of heroism he embodies, however, are unfit for the history books. Across the Seine, his sole refuge from immiseration – his reward, his *médaille de la Légion d’honneur* – the Chamber of Deputies proudly flies a tricolor flag, the very same symbol, that is, for which this man traded in his every possession, including his body. All that remains to him are the pawnshop tickets out of which he has stitched together *his* redingote, an emblem of bourgeois subjectivity Daumier turns inside out. Of

⁸⁷ Quoted in H. A. C. Collingham, *The July Monarchy: A Political History of France, 1830-1848* (London: Longman, 1988), p. 166.

course he will never be able to make good on these receipts; abstractions of the value they represent, an archive of this man's deprivation, they offer him no greater promise of fulfillment than the Chamber of Deputies across the river.

The force of Daumier's lithograph – its bite – no doubt has much to do with the identity it establishes between the Chamber of Deputies and the Mont de Piété, both of which issue “the people” empty receipts in return for their sacrifices, both of which count on “the people” not to reappear. Still, it seems to me that the lithograph would be half of what it is if this identity did not hinge on signs of dividedness and difference: the broken body of the anonymous *invalide* (he is a “hero” denied recognition, an everyman alienated from self and society alike); the balustrade that cuts, horizontally and flatly, across the picture plane, foregrounding its function as partition and barrier (this Pont de la Concorde separates rather than unifies); the Seine; the inevitable seams ensured by the combination of shoddy stitch-work and impractical materials; the inscription on each pawnshop ticket identifying the object hocked; the sole of a bandaged, soiled foot and the eternal whiteness of a classical façade; the *pavé* and the tricolor flag, the one a unity, the other a fragment, the one a means, the other an end; the triumph of the past (*un héros de juillet*) and the indignity of the present (*mai 1831*). This is a radically different kind of memoriality; it turns on deterioration, disenchantment, and resignation; it is distrustful of representation, of its own function and purpose. It cannot escape the negative; nor can it resist the pull of pessimism. It seems clear to me, however, that negativity was not what Daumier was after, that he hoped to redeem commemoration rather than invert the forms of commemoration then available. What good, I can imagine him wondering, would it do to turn this man around, clean him up, heal his body, give him a worker's smock and a *bonnet rouge*, place the *pavé* in a powerful and confident hand – in other words, make this *héros* truly heroic, put him back in the Revolution, pretend that the Revolution was indeed his, even his for the taking? Daumier knew this other image well; he would use it often in the following years. But it would not do in 1831. I suspect he did not know precisely what would. In short, Daumier reaches out for an alternative, gives it a firmness and solidity, but struggles to find positive and enduring meaning in it, as if he sensed he could not expunge the lithograph's negativity without compromising what it makes visible. The drawing had to remain as it was, unresolved, an ode to a forgotten *héros* and an image of suicide.

If Daumier was unsure of the form commemoration needed to take in 1831, he knew what was at stake. He knew that to redress history he had not just to change its key, but to take it out of key, not just to turn it upside down, but inside out. This is not to say, of course, that what came to matter to Daumier were the unvarnished “facts” of history; he might have longed for a world without mediation, but he had no illusions about present realities. What redressing history did entail was seeing history matter-of-factly, representing it matter-of-factly – that is, seeing and representing it in its partiality. Matter-of-factness had nothing to do, for Daumier, with impassivity or neutrality. On the contrary, for him it always had a critical dimension: it demanded an intimacy with rather than a distance from history; it disrupted the mediations that rendered history and those who made history difficult to see. Matter-of-factness, in other words, meant grounding history differently, giving back to history the weight – the meaningfulness – proper to it. It contravened representation by way of representation. Matter-of-factness was what Daumier sought in 1831; it compelled him, in turn, to have truck with what troubled him

most, with a negativity he wanted to avoid but could not. Irresolution is the burden *Un héros de juillet* bears; but it is also what makes the challenge the lithograph poses so trenchant, so apt.

In April, political tensions boiled over; rebellion was once again converting Lyons and Paris into battlefields. The first barricades appeared on April 9th, in Lyons; five days later, Paris followed suit. The rebels held neither front for very long. By the time barricades went up in Paris on the 13th, Lyons had already fallen. Rebels in Paris fared even worse; they managed a day and a half. Arrests in both cities were numerous, casualties in Lyons high. The Monarchy's victory, swift and uncompromising, was conclusive: neither Paris nor Lyons would see a rebellion like it until 1848. On the 15th, Louis-Philippe's ministers pitched two new measures to the Chamber of Deputies: the first appropriated funds to raise and equip a regular army entrusted with internal security; the second stiffened penalties against anyone caught in possession of war-quality firearms.⁸⁸ Alarmed by the ever present specter of social unrest – never mind the mounting campaign to expand the franchise beyond the propertied classes – the electorate returned the favor in June, stripping nearly every republican deputy of his seat in the Chamber. If any question still remained as to how the Monarchy planned to proceed, the following proclamation, issued with respect to the granting of indemnities, made its intentions clear: “Le gouvernement ne voudra pas que le triomphe de l'ordre social coûte des larmes et des regrets. Il sait que le temps qui efface insensiblement la douleur que causent les pertes personnelles les plus chères, est impuissant à faire oublier les pertes de fortune.”⁸⁹ “The whole morality of the July Monarchy can be found in these words.”⁹⁰

The arbitrary use of violence the government exercised in quelling the insurrection – especially when, on the 14th, soldiers from the 35th Regiment stormed the tenement at 12, rue Transnonain (they claimed sniper fire had issued from its top floor) and massacred 14 men, women, and children – nevertheless assured the dead would leave their mark. “Power and violence,” Hannah Arendt posits, “are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance. This implies that it is not correct to think of the opposite of violence as nonviolence; to speak of nonviolent power is actually redundant. Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it.”⁹¹ None of the atrocities as yet committed by or for the Orléanist Monarchy had born out Arendt's claims as meaningfully as the massacre at 12, rue Transnonain; indeed, it was the clarity with which the massacre realized the opposition – the vulnerability of power in the face of its own wanton violence – that crystallized “Rue Transnonain” as one of the century's most poignant and durable symbolic forms, impervious even to Haussmann's demolitions. It was what made “Rue Transnonain” so dangerous.

In part a response to the new Law of Associations, which the Chamber of Deputies began debating on February 25th, only days after a week-long strike had brought

⁸⁸ François Guizot, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1860), pp. 249-250.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Jean Skerlitch, *L'Opinion publique en France d'après la poésie politique et sociale de 1830 à 1848* (Lausanne, 1901), p. 72.

⁹⁰ Skerlitch, p. 72. Quoted in Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 717. To distinguish Skerlitch's commentary from the 1834 proclamation, I have used the English translation provided in *The Arcades Project*. It was there, in Benjamin's notes, that I encountered both the proclamation and Skerlitch's book.

⁹¹ Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), p. 56.

twenty-five thousand looms in and around Lyons to a halt, the April insurrection evinced a political self-consciousness and coherence that set it apart from previous insurrections; it had none of the spontaneity of 1832, little of the social volatility of 1831. Engineered by the *comité central* of the *SDHC* and led by *SDHC* sections in each city, April 1834 was a planned affair with a clear-cut goal: destroy the Monarchy, reestablish *the* Republic. The *SDHC* looked to 1793 more than 1830, more to Robespierre's *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* and Buonarroti's *La Conspiration pour l'Égalité* than the *Charte de 1830* and the *Programme de l'Hôtel-de-Ville*. April 1834, in other words, was to be a kind of do-over, or rather, a revival with different results. The Monarchy, as it were, had reason to be worried, to fear conspiratorial plots and the capability of the *SDHC* to pull them off. As all of this might suggest, the insurrection did not catch the Monarchy unawares; the government had been waiting for it, planning for it; and in the end, it proved notably better prepared for street battle than the rebels. Thiers, then Minister of the Interior, made sure of it: in the days leading up to the 13th, the day when Paris was set to take up the torch, he issued arrest warrants for all known leaders of the *SDHC* in the capital. A preemptive measure, the strategy cut straight to the rebellion's weakness. The alliances the *SDHC* had formed with workers outside of its ranks were already uncertain; the arrest warrants, which put the *SDHC* leadership on the run, guaranteed they would remain so. "The people" by and large chose to stay home.

The April insurrection broke out three weeks before the Salon closed. The full extent to which the disorder of events impacted the Salon is, however, difficult to assess. Of the Salon critics still publishing reviews, only one – H. H. H. of the Royalist *La Quotidienne* – addressed the insurrection directly. "Aujourd'hui," his opening paragraph concludes, "l'affreux drame est achevé. Nul ne saurait entendre le canon, ni le fusil en quelque lieu que ce soit. Lyon compte ses ruines, Paris ses massacres, l'ordre règne en France: nous reprenons, nous écrivain artiste, nos travaux d'art, pour ceux qui trouveront leur esprit présent pour nous lire au sortir de l'effroyable tourmente qui laisse tant de nobles cœurs si profondément ulcéré."⁹² The formula develops as we might expect: the interruption of politics having coming to an end, let us now return to art. There is, nevertheless, something peculiar about the language itself. "Lyon compte ses ruines, Paris ses massacres, l'ordre règne en France": the timbre of the sequence – the direction of its address – pivots on its final component. Doubtless meant to summon the cynical declaration with which Horace Sébastiani, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, welcomed the brutal subjugation of Polish insurgents by Russian Cossacks in 1831 – "L'ordre règne à Varsovie" – the expression had been used before, after demonstrators touting the Polish cause in Paris and striking silkworkers in Lyons had been subdued with comparable force. By 1834, the expression had long since been turned on itself, processed into fodder for satirists and sloganeers who recycled it as shorthand for the Monarchy's disingenuousness and self-denial.⁹³ "L'ordre règne en France," then, ought to be taken

⁹² H.H.H., "Salon de 1834," *La Quotidienne*, April 22, 1834.

⁹³ J.-J. Grandville gives particularly vivid expression to Sébastiani's cynicism with two lithographs from September 1831, *L'Ordre règne à Varsovie* and *L'Ordre public règne aussi à Paris*. The first shows a Cossack, his boots soaked in Polish blood, blithely smoking a pipe amid decapitated heads and half-bodies,

sarcastically – not, however, for its callous disregard, but for its falsehood, because the Monarchy, this critic intimates, had bought into its own mythology. It is no accident that he then proceeds to review Victor Schnetz’s *Combat de l’Hôtel-de-Ville, le 28 juillet 1830* (fig. 24) and Horace Vernet’s *L’Arrivée du duc d’Orléans au Palais-Royal, dans la soirée du 30 juillet 1830* (fig. 25), both of which he derides as government buyouts, naked propaganda, delusional attempts, yet again, to reconcile order and disorder. The primary object of his contempt, in other words, is the Orleanist Monarchy, whose hedged bets guarantee its own demise. Take, for example, the way his description of the crowd in *Combat de l’Hôtel-de-Ville* quickly becomes a portent of things to come: “Tout le premier plan est encombré de ces hommes du peuple et de ces *sublimes gamins* que le pouvoir naissant louait alors de tout le mal qu’ils avaient fait, et qu’aujourd’hui, pour des circonstances semblables, il traite de lâches assassins.” Or the following excerpt from his account of *L’Arrivée du duc d’Orléans au Palais-Royal*:

Ceci...c’est Paris, c’est la rue au 30 juillet, c’est le peuple qui s’est battu, et qui, pendant quelques jours, se croira quelques chose ou appelé à quelque chose; mais, à droite du tableau, voyez cet homme qui crie en ôtant sa casquette; cet homme est celui qui n’a point combattu, qui sort à l’instant de sa cave, et qui, pour le moment, petit, peureux et tremblant, va bientôt grandir et dominer plus brave que lui...Regardez à gauche: voici un autre homme, la cocarde tricolore au chapeau, entouré d’hommes qui lui servent d’escorte, et s’empresent pour le faire entrer par une petite porte batarde au Palais-Royal, et le soustraire ainsi à la rue. Cet autre homme, inquiet et furtif, c’est Louis-Philippe, nommé par le roi Charles X lieutenant général du royaume, tuteur de Henri V... Cet homme, enfin, c’est Louis-Philippe, fuyant toutes les manifestations franches d’opinions, et se glissant inaperçu dans sa citadelle de pouvoir, d’où il tonnera bientôt sur les vainqueurs muselés; et maintenant vous savez pourquoi l’homme peureux ôtait sa casquette; vous savez pourquoi l’homme des caves criait si fort, c’est qu’il avait reconnu son roi, et dans ce peureux si braillard, vous pouvez examiner le juste milieu naissant.

Drop the invocation of Charles X and Henri V and these words might just as well have been written from the other side of the political spectrum. Of course we cannot, nor should we overemphasize potential compatibilities; the point this critic is trying to make

the gallows only just coming down in the background. In the other, a *sergent de ville* wipes the blood of a demonstrator – only the legs of this man make it into the picture – from his sword, an empty, blood-stained chair to his left, the riot squads behind. C-J. Traviès completed the descent to bathos four months later with *L’Ordre le plus parfait règne aussi dans Lyon*. Here, a grossly obese National Guard, his bearskin more than his head can handle, takes a pinch of snuff as he keeps watch over Lyons’ defeated *canuts*. See David S. Kerr, *Caricature and French Political Culture, 1830-1848: Charles Philipon and the Illustrated Press* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 76-77.

– about middling politics and about middling art, about how middling politics produces middling art and about how middling art expresses middling politics – turns on their presence. So long as the Revolution continues to be a touchstone, the equation states, political and artistic life will never transcend the disarray from which their current form derived: April 1834 and Horace Vernet represent for him the same inevitability; they are woven into the very fabric of the *juste milieu*. Another Legitimist critic, Paulin Lim, put it more straightforwardly: “l’on prétend que l’art fait des progrès, que l’art est en vigueur: – L’art restera toujours indécis, et ballotté, jusqu’à ce que la France ait dit à la révolution, comme Dieu à la mer: ‘Tu n’iras pas plus loin.’ La France le dira bientôt.”⁹⁴ Republicans offered a modified diagnosis and, predictably, a different course of treatment: “La seule vérité” – this is Hauréau – “qui puisse encore rallier les hommes dans ce chaos de négations, la république, est ici proscrite: la royauté n’accepte pas dans ses musées les inspirations de la liberté.”⁹⁵

With *L’Arrivée du duc d’Orléans au Palais-Royal* and *Combat de l’Hôtel-de-Ville* the image the July Monarchy had devised for itself – indeed, the affirmative image of 1830 *tout court* – had become an anachronism. Farcy, writing about *Combat de l’Hôtel-de-Ville*, cut straight to the chase:

Cette oeuvre importante est une nouvelle preuve du peu de chance de succès durable qu’ont les tableaux de circonstance, les tableaux qui retracent des événemens politiques contemporains, surtout quand ces événemens se rattachent aux guerres civiles. Dans le premier moment d’enthousiasme pour la cause qui triomphe, c’est a merveille; mais après plusieurs mois, les esprits se refroidissent; et de même qu’on ne voudrait pas voir perpétuer en réalité la guerre civile, de même, on est peu désireux de la voir perpétuer en peinture.⁹⁶

Farcy was right, and the government knew it. *Combat de l’Hôtel-de-Ville* was a commission from another time; assigned to Schnetz in December 1830, the painting was supposed to have been finished, ready to be hung alongside three others in the Hôtel de Ville’s Salle du Trône, by the first anniversary of the Revolution.⁹⁷ Commissioned sometime in 1832 – the exacting timing is unknown – *L’Arrivée du duc d’Orléans au Palais-Royal* was no more timely.⁹⁸ “Espérons que ses ouvrages de cette année seront les

⁹⁴ Lim, “Salon de 1834,” *Le Légitimiste* no. 10 (1834): p. 478.

⁹⁵ Hauréau, “Salon de 1834,” *La Tribune politique et littéraire*, March 3, 1834. For a discussion of the centrality of a debate over the relationship between art and forms of government in the Salon criticism of 1834, see Andrew Carrington Shelton, “Art, Politics, and the Politics of Art: Ingres’s *Saint Symphorien* at the 1834 Salon,” *The Art Bulletin* vol. 83, no. 4 (December 2001): pp. 714-739.

⁹⁶ Farcy, “Salon de 1834,” *Journal des artistes* (March 23, 1834): pp. 190-191.

⁹⁷ For a full history of the commission and the Hôtel de Ville program, see Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, *L’État & les artistes: de la Restauration à la monarchie de Juillet (1815-1833)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999), pp. 204-205; and Marrinan, *Painting Politics for Louis-Philippe*, pp. 98-107.

⁹⁸ Vernet wrote to Louis-Philippe on July 5, 1832 to explain delays in its completion. Cited in Marrinan, p. 54, 235 [note 158].

derniers de la liste,” implored Gustave Planche.⁹⁹ Evidently unconcerned with the picture’s critical failure, Louis-Philippe had a copy of *L’Arrivée du duc d’Orléans au Palais-Royal* made for Versailles before having it hung in his private gallery at the Palais-Royal.¹⁰⁰ *Combat de l’Hôtel-de-Ville* never made it to its projected destination. The public life of both paintings, as it were, ended with the Salon.

These were bad pictures, belated expressions of a defunct politics. Nearly every critic agreed. But the two paintings fell short for different reasons. Criticism of Vernet’s picture centered on two basic points: its historical (in)accuracy – a social question as much as a question of facticity – and its baldly propagandistic message. How the picture was painted mattered to few; if critics did address issues of form or style, they generally did so to denigrate Vernet as a facile painter driven by opportunism and a shameless desire to appease whoever might be footing the bill. Laviron’s assessment is broadly indicative:

Comme oeuvre d’art, le tableau de M. Horace Vernet ne mérite pas une critique sérieuse. On ne sait pas s’il fait jour ou s’il fait nuit, ni comment sont éclairés les personnages, ni comment ils se trouvent là, ni ce qu’ils y font; et puis ce n’est pas là le Paris du 30 juillet au soir; probablement M. Vernet n’était pas à Paris, ou, s’il y était, il est mal servi par ses souvenirs; car dès le matin il n’y avait plus de barricades, et l’on avait commencé à repaver les rues.

[...]

Pour faire passer cette bévue, M. Vernet a mis au milieu de la rue l’hydre de l’anarchie, qu’il a représentée par deux ou trois éternels ennemis de l’ordre qui roulent les yeux en regardant en dessous, comme Francisque dans ses beaux rôles à l’Ambigu-Comique; et pour faire contraste, il a peint de l’autre côté de la toile un honnête bourgeois du quartier qui s’est brusquement décoiffé, et tient respectueusement sa casquette à la main avec l’air de se dire: Tiens, tiens, tiens, voilà notre brave homme de propriétaire qui est revenue de la campagne; hé bien! en voilà un crâne de propriétaire celui-là, et qui n’a pas peur des révolutions! On ne peut rien voir de plus bête et de plus décontenancé que le bourgeois de M. Vernet.

En résumé, voici l’analyse de ce tableau: nul comme oeuvre d’art, faux comme fait historique, maladroit comme flatterie de courtisan.¹⁰¹

Make the necessary changes – call the picture “la nature, la vérité, l’histoire,” describe the workers reading a proclamation around a barricade as having “une physiognomie qui

⁹⁹ Planche, “Salon de 1834,” *Revue des deux mondes* vol. 2 (April 1, 1834): pp. 63-64.

¹⁰⁰ Marrinan, p. 54.

¹⁰¹ Laviron, *Salon de 1834*, p. 118-119.

rappelle les trops fameux héros de l'*Auberge des Adrets*," say something about "le libre suffrage de la bourgeoisie" – and the other side of the debate, argued only in the pages of unabashed Orleanist organs like *Le Courrier française* and *Le Moniteur universel*, comes into focus.¹⁰² Laviron's hunch was spot on: Vernet, then director of the French Academy in Rome, had not been in Paris on the night in question, and had worked, exclusively, from documents Louis-Philippe had had sent to him.¹⁰³ *L'Arrivée du duc d'Orléans au Palais-Royal*, to put it bluntly, was history twice-removed.

Critics by and large concurred that *Combat de l'Hôtel-de-Ville* deserved no greater praise than *L'Arrivée du duc d'Orléans au Palais-Royal*, that it, even more than its wayworn companion, stank of factitiousness. Even so, they were kinder to Schnetz; most considered him a different breed of artist from Vernet, less the by-product of his age – less a manufacturer of things – than a well-intentioned painter, an estimable painter of Italian peasants who, in accepting a commission for which he was ill-suited, betrayed his gifts: "Quel ami jaloux de sa gloire," remarked Planche, "a pu demander à son pinceau de retracer la *Prise de l'Hôtel-de-Ville en 1830*? Un ennemi personnel et acharné n'aurait pu lui donner un conseil plus perfide."¹⁰⁴ "A Rome! M. Schnetz, à Rome!" exhorted Charles Lenormant. "Tout Paris vous criera comme moi: Retournez à Rome!"¹⁰⁵ The ineptness of *Combat de l'Hôtel-de-Ville* was forgivable, then, due in large part to the programmatic demands of a commission the painter could shoulder only with discomfort. Critics had a harder time excusing the painting's derivative composition: the openness with which Schnetz modeled *Combat de l'Hôtel-de-Ville* on Delacroix's *Liberté guidant le peuple* did him no favors. "*La Barricade* de M. Delacroix," Alexandre Decamps noted, "est trop présente au souvenir du public pour que la comparaison ne se présente pas rapidement à l'esprit de chacun, et ne vienne pas rendre plus saillans les défauts du tableau de M. Schnetz."¹⁰⁶ No doubt Decamps was right, even if he alone thought to make an explicit point of it. *Combat de l'Hôtel-de-Ville*, despite itself, is everything *Liberté guidant le peuple* is not: clean, balanced, static, masculine, rational, located, episodic, prosaic, total, resolved; its figures, in unbroken unison, charge into the pictured space, toward the Hôtel de Ville and away from the viewer; they are tightly drawn, proportional, and properly scaled; they pose no challenge to the frame that encloses them, to the genre that defines them, or to the social stereotypes that classify them, control them, bring them into focus and make them legible. In a word, *Combat de l'Hôtel-de-Ville* completes *Liberté guidant le peuple*, fleshes out its fragments, releases the pressure of its cropped edges and absent foreground, gives it polish – *fini*.

Against the memory of *Liberté guidant le peuple*, *Combat de l'Hôtel-de-Ville* looked cumbersome and heavy-handed, its version of July 28, 1830 overly controlled and safe. Critics came down especially hard on Schnetz's image of the crowd and the student – Liberty's replacement – who spurs it on. The crowd, they thought, appeared wooden, even indifferent; it lacked *élan*. The student, like the crowd as a whole, seemed unmoved, oddly impassive and aloof, but also decidedly unfit to lead the charge, devoid

¹⁰² Alexandre Tardieu, "Salon de 1834," *Le courrier français*, March 11, 1834; Fabien Pillet, "Salon de 1834," *Le montiteur universel*, April 7, 1834. The quoted phrases come from Tardieu.

¹⁰³ Marrinan, p. 54.

¹⁰⁴ Planche, pp. 62-63.

¹⁰⁵ Lenormant, "Salon de 1834," *Le Temps*, March 3, 1834.

¹⁰⁶ Alexandre Decamps, *Le Musée. Revue de Salon de 1834* (Paris, 1834), p. 64.

of aplomb, too affected, too delicate, too *charmant*. “Par son costume d’ailleurs,” observed Fabien Pillet, “et par son geste, cet élégant jeune homme ressemble trop à un comédien.”¹⁰⁷ Pillet demanded a *primus inter pares* with unimpeachable motives, a determined and selfless leader of men, a man of the crowd rather than above it; but all he saw was an “élévation théâtrale,” a *jeune homme* whose individuation, in turn, spoke only to private interests. It is not, I should be clear, that Pillet hoped to see another Liberty on this barricade, or rather, Liberty’s male equivalent; the *homme de tête* he imagined would be poetic because indisputably historical, because, as such, he would truly represent the crowd above which he has been raised; nominated by those he leads, he would, in short, be legitimate. There was no need for Pillet to elaborate: he was simply re-inscribing official mythologies and accepted histories. What compelled Pillet to issue his corrective, however, was not the unorthodox history Schnetz’s student seemed to embody; true or false, that history fell flat. It was, rather, the artificiality of this *jeune homme* that put Pillet on edge; he distrusted the acclaim Schnetz granted the *jeune homme*, considered it dangerous because it valorized a performance the picture failed to recognize as such: “je ne veux pas que le spectateur voie en lui le héros de l’affaire, et lui attribue, comme à un illustre général d’armée, la plus forte part d’une gloire qui appartient en commun à l’insurrection.” The danger, for Pillet, was that this *jeune homme* recast the history of 1830 as *représentation*, risked exposing its denouement as unnatural.

Pillet was selling an ideology that had passed its expiration date, one even the Monarchy seemed by then to have been eager to let rot. The questions had to be changed; history had to be pushed forward. I think Pillet was right, nevertheless, to make a point of the painting’s theatricality. In front of *Combat de l’Hôtel-de-Ville* we do indeed become *spectateurs* watching on as one of history’s pivotal events is played out before our eyes. Agreed, the painting distances itself from its viewers; its barricade, both stage and scrim, concretizes our difference. I think Pillet was right, as well, to see the *spectacle* as a threat. The question, however, is whether that threat still had purchase in 1834, whether, that is, the spectacularization of 1830 – its projection into the past, its refashioning as stage-drama, its hypostatization as *représentation* – was, at the time, really all that undesirable. I suspect it was not. At least I do not suspect, as some art historians have suggested, that the Monarchy came to fear *Combat de l’Hôtel-de-Ville* for its potential to incite unrest.¹⁰⁸ True, the Monarchy chose not to have the painting installed in the Hôtel de Ville; in the end, it scrapped the whole program, which was to affirm the continuity not only between the Monarchy and the July Revolution, but also between 1830 and 1789. The notion that 1830 had both extended and completed 1789 had proven unsustainable: history as oblivion replaced history as mystification. *Combat de l’Hôtel-de-Ville* would be the last major work to address the barricades of 1830. The Monarchy needed a new concept of history; it needed new images; it needed to make passivity acceptable. Above all, it needed 1830 to enter the past tense, to become a thing of the past. Seen from this angle, the almost universal choice of Schnetz’s critics to use the word *froidueur* to describe the tonality of *Combat de l’Hôtel-de-Ville* comes to seem not just apposite, but incisive; the painting’s coldness is its indifference. *Combat de*

¹⁰⁷ Pillet, “Salon de 1834,” *Le montiteur universel*, March 26, 1834.

¹⁰⁸ Chaudonneret, p. 205. Marrinan comes to a similar conclusion, but emphasizes the picture’s “iconographic anachronisms” (Marrinan, p. 107).

l'Hôtel-de-Ville, perhaps originally intended to popularize history by rendering it anecdotal – perhaps, that is, initially meant to do the ideological work of what Michael Marrinan calls the *genre historique* – ended up signaling its own inconsequentiality, its own dispensability.¹⁰⁹

A propos du lamentable massacre de la rue Transnonain, Daumier se montra vraiment grand artiste; le dessin est devenu assez rare, car il fut saisi et détruit. Ce n'est pas précisément de la caricature, c'est de l'histoire, de la triviale et terrible réalité. – Dans une chambre pauvre et triste, la chambre traditionnelle du prolétaire, aux meubles banals et indispensables, le corps d'un ouvrier nu, en chemise et en bonnet de coton, gît sur le dos, tout de son long, les jambes et les bras écartés. Il y a eu sans doute dans la chambre une grande lutte et un grand tapage, car les chaises sont renversées, ainsi que la table de nuit et le pot de chambre. Sous le poids de son cadavre, le père écrase entre son dos et le carreau le cadavre de son petit enfant. Dans cette mansarde froide il n'y a rien que le silence et la mort.¹¹⁰

This is Charles Baudelaire describing Daumier's *Rue Transnonain, le 15 avril 1834* (fig. 26) in 1857. Compare this passage from “Quelques caricaturistes français” with the sales pitch Charles Philipon published in *La Caricature* on October 2, 1834, shortly after La Maison Aubert dispatched impressions of *Rue Transnonain* to subscribers of *L'Association mensuelle lithographique*:

Cette lithographie est horrible à voir, horrible comme l'action épouvantable qu'elle retrace. C'est un vieillard assassiné, une femme morte, un cadavre d'homme criblé de blessures qui gît sur le corps d'un pauvre petit enfant dont le crâne est fendu. Ce n'est point une caricature ce n'est point une charge, c'est une page sanglante de notre histoire moderne, page tracée par une main vigoureuse et dictée par une noble indignation. Daumier, dans ce dessin, s'est élevé à une grande hauteur, il a fait un tableau qui, pour être peint en noir et sur une feuille de papier, n'en sera ni moins estimé ni moins durable. La boucherie de la rue Transnonain sera pour ceux qui l'ont soufferte une tache ineffaçable, et le dessin que nous citons sera la médaille

¹⁰⁹ On the development of the *genre historique*, see Marrinan, pp. 19-24.

¹¹⁰ Baudelaire, “Quelques caricaturistes français,” in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), p. 729. “Quelques caricaturistes français” was first published in *Présent* on October 1, 1857.

frappée dans le temps pour perpétuer le souvenir de la victoire remportée sur quatorze vieillards, femmes ou enfans.¹¹¹

When Philipon printed this *explication*, he surely knew that most of the impressions sent out only days earlier would never reach their destination. He had been dodging the new stamp tax for months, receiving in turn one menacing letter after another from the tax bureau. In July, the *fisc* issued its final warning; future non-compliance, it assured Philipon, would result in legal action. At the time, *Rue Transnonain*, which Daumier had recently completed, was being fitted out for publication. Philipon had no choice but to postpone its release. Of course, he had no intention of heeding the *fisc*'s warning. Conceding would have been bad business: high-quality caricatures disfigured by a "hideux cachet," decimated profits.¹¹² Upon its release in August *Rue Transnonain* remained unstamped. Already aware of the lithograph's potential to stir up an audience – it had spent part of July in the *vitrine* of La Maison Aubert – the government acted without delay, seizing proofs as soon as they left the *imprimerie*; to ensure extinction, *gendarmes* confiscated and destroyed the lithographic stone. I do not doubt that Philipon envisioned the *explication* as an advertisement; manufacturing demand was a strategy he embraced fully. But we would be mistaken, all the same, if we were to read it merely as such; the language of the *explication*, unlike the expository style he adopted in promoting previous installments of *L'Association mensuelle*, is as restrained as it is grandiose, as blunt and assertive as it is tantalizing;¹¹³ it takes value in both senses. Private and public interests, that is, here converged for Philipon: *Rue Transnonain* transcended the day-to-day business of caricature, the quick wit of *la charge*; history demanded a language appropriate to it, but it still needed to be seen.

I would not be surprised if Baudelaire had composed his assessment of *Rue Transnonain* with Philipon's *explication* in front of him; surely he had read it and had appreciated its terms. The similarities between the two are unmistakable, too unmistakable, I am tempted to say, to be written off to coincidence. I cannot help but think Baudelaire wanted to make a point of the repetition, as if that repetition, for him, could mean something specific, as if it could give heightened definition to what he saw in *Rue Transnonain* that led him, like Philipon, to consider it more historical than caricature. I find it hard to believe that either Baudelaire or Philipon would have stressed the distinction if it were solely – even primarily – a matter of genre and the greater purchase of one – the "noble genre" – on the historical; few at the time understood as well as they

¹¹¹ Philipon, "24e dessin de la lithographie mensuelle. Rue Transnonain, le 15 avril 1834," *La Caricature*, October 2, 1834.

¹¹² Edwin de T. Bechtel, *Freedom of the Press and L'Association Mensuelle: Philipon versus Louis-Philippe* (New York: The Grolier Club, 1952), pp. 36-37.

¹¹³ See, for example, Philipon's *explication* of *Ne vous y frottez pas!!*: "La liberté de la presse, personnifiée par un jeune et vigoureux imprimeur attend, bien campée, les attaques d'un gros et gras personnage que pousse Persil et qu'Odilon Barrot cherche à retenir. Charles X, renversé et secouru par les monarques étrangers, témoigne du sort que pourrait réserver à son nouvel adversaire le puissant athlète auquel Daumier a su donner un si beau caractère de force et d'indépendance./Nous ne craignons pas de dire que cette planche... exécutée à la manière des Anglais, d'un dessin large, ferme, et cependant plein de finesse, est un des meilleurs croquis politiques faits en France." Philipon, "Dessin du mois de mars," *La Caricature*, June 8, 1834.

that modernity might best be handled with a lithographic crayon: “ce n’est pas *précisément* de la caricature.”¹¹⁴ Nobility might have remained an indispensable part of the equation for Philipon, but only insofar as indignation provided its measure. For Philipon, the very substance of history itself was at stake; he wanted to ensure that the stains did not come out in the wash. Baudelaire seems to have agreed, at least partly; for him, however, the barbaric and the ordinary in history could not so easily be prised apart, or plotted along a vertical axis of value. *Rue Transnonain* is “de l’histoire” for Baudelaire because the form Daumier gives it – its suffering, its enormity, its conversion of misery into necessity – embodies both simultaneously. Meaningfulness in the conventional sense provides no insurance against oblivion in *Rue Transnonain*; its image turns on coldness, silence, and death.

The inflection Baudelaire gives Philipon’s *explication* conjures a similarly notorious document from the time – indeed a document that, in its refusal to dissociate meaningfulness and ordinariness, may very well be considered the verbal pendant to Daumier’s lithograph: Ledru-Rollin’s wildly popular pamphlet *Mémoire sur les événements de la rue Transnonain, dans les journées des 13 et 14 avril 1834*.¹¹⁵ Consisting almost exclusively of interviews Ledru-Rollin conducted with survivors of the massacre, the pamphlet not only recasts history, but gives it an entirely new voice, a voice both idiosyncratic and collective, spectacular and everyday; it is the voice of ordinary people recorded in their own words, below their names and ages and genders and occupations. Ledru-Rollin, a lawyer by trade, envisioned a new kind of memoriality and historicity: he proposed to make the events of April 13th and 14th present by ushering “the people” into the universe of speakers. Yet what makes Ledru-Rollin’s version of the *vox populi* instructive – what gives it a distinct authority – is its repetitiveness, the way each account, unique in itself, confirms the others by repeating them. No one testimonial, as it were, takes precedence over any other; no one is exceptional. They are, each of them, one among many all of which, together, constitute a *mémoire*. Philipon had excerpts from the *Mémoire* printed in the August 4th issue of *Le Charivari*, introducing it as an irrefutable repudiation of “les mots royaux.”¹¹⁶ The *Mémoire*, for Philipon, was identical to the event itself.¹¹⁷

Daumier did not have Ledru-Rollin’s confidence; nor did he presume he could – or should – fade into the background. It is not the spectacle of the massacre – sensational, sensationalizable – that Daumier wants us to see, but the atonality of its aftermath, its body count. He does not give names to the slaughtered; he does not claim to give a voice to suffering; he does not purport to make the experience sharable. “Dans cette mansarde froide il n’y a rien que le silence et la mort.” Baudelaire is right: wreckage and debris tend not to have a way with words. Their history begins the day after, when decomposition and rot set in; it foregrounds the ineffable and senseless, the negligible: an anonymous working-class family gunned down while going through the

¹¹⁴ Michèle Hannoosh argues, and I think rightly, that *Rue Transnonain* “represents caricature at its best in the Baudelairean scheme.” See Hannoosh, *Baudelaire and Caricature: From the Comic to an Art of Modernity* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), esp. pp. 136-138.

¹¹⁵ The pamphlet was first published in late July. Copies sold so quickly that a second edition was required only three weeks later.

¹¹⁶ *Le Charivari*, August 4, 1834.

¹¹⁷ My reading of the *Mémoire* has been informed by Jacques Rancière’s *Les Noms de l’histoire*, esp. pp. 89-124.

paces of its nightly routine; it appears in grotesque form, often obscene, sometimes abject, almost always violent: the splayed legs of a worker indecorously exposed as the friction of his inert body sliding against rough floor-boarding pulls the blood-stained nightshirt that once covered them in another direction; the head of this man, awkwardly propped forward – chin to sternum – by a disheveled bed, his features neither ugly nor distinguished, yet rendered gaunt by poverty, the bullet-hole that has pierced his temple barely visible by comparison; the foreshortened body of a woman lying stiffly on her back, seen from below and headless; the balding pate of an old man, his features avian and emaciated, his body severed at the breast; an infant, face down in a pool of blood, crushed beneath the weight of his father's corpse as it slumps from bed to floor, the only intimation that his small body might still be intact registered in his father's distended torso; the entryway to a *toilette* still open because, only moments before, still in use; a naked pillow; the soles of bare feet. Again, Baudelaire is right: terrible and trivial reality coincide in *Rue Transnonain*. There is, nevertheless, nothing sentimental, nothing sensationalist or rhetorical about the way Daumier figures these deaths. *Rue Transnonain* mourns the massacred, but offers no signs of redemption, that their bodies might be anything greater or more meaningful than themselves. Why should they have to be? The caption – *Rue Transnonain, le 15 avril 1834* – says all that needs to be said: a street and a date, the site of massacre on the following day, when maggots pose a greater threat than rifles and bayonets. These are the facts, flatly stated; they do not presume to break the silence of death; they do not distinguish between the trivial and the terrible, the momentous and the senseless, the great and the small; they do not elevate. But neither do they objectify: *Rue Transnonain* is not, as some have presumed, a still-life;¹¹⁸ it is not fit for consumption. Like the image as a whole, the caption is not so much short on words as it is painfully precise.

Rue Transnonain is an unforgiving image; it is all dead weight, earthbound. We are not meant to decode it; it conceals nothing. Nor are we meant to read it; or rather, we are not meant to read it if by reading we hope to activate it, to alleviate it, to loosen the blood-splattered floorboards that anchor it, to give it the temporality of the living. *Rue Transnonain* shows us a world irreversibly turned sideways, defined by the shared relationship of its people and its things to the simple ground across which they have been laid out. We cannot reevaluate these people or those things; we cannot see above their low-lying horizontality or stand them upright; the picture – its frame, format, and point of view, but also its orienting axis, an oblique diagonal from lower left to upper right whose slope runs more than it rises – disallows it. Everything, here, occurs at or below bed-level, on the floor, and in relation to the barren corner at lower left – barren, that is, except for Daumier's prominent initials. Even the shaft of light that rakes across the picture appears subject to its gravitational force. Notice how the line it cuts across the floor turns the angle of light against itself – the refraction has no apparent material source – and redirects it, along with everything in its path, downward and to the left; it is as if the shaft of light were barring its own route, as if it too had substance and mass. It bears down on the worker, threatens to bleach him out just as it seems to enforce the woman's tenebrous obscurity. Daumier's drawing appears no less encumbered, no less substantial;

¹¹⁸ Michael Marrinan, *Romantic Paris: Histories of a Cultural Landscape, 1800-1850* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 362. See also Ségolène Le Men's catalogue entry for *Rue Transnonain* in *Daumier, 1808-1879* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées nationaux, 1999), pp. 177-78.

its lines are definite, hard-edged and largely unbroken, its modeling confident and conflicted by turns: white and black negate form even as they affirm it, prohibit vision even as they make it possible. The majority of Daumier's lithographs from the early '30s evince a similar commitment to the sculptural qualities of form – its masses, its volumes, its densities – and the tactility of things, a sensibility, that is to say, to weightedness, to the way matter not only has weight but bears weight. Still, the heaviness of Daumier's hand in *Rue Transnonain* seems to me exceptionally salient, almost too palpable, almost brutal. It is relieved neither by the abstractions of the symbolic nor the artificiality of the physiognomic; it, too, aligns meaningfulness with presentness, but simply to confirm its own deadpan matter-of-factness. It cuts out noise in order to make visible.

Philipon was right to emphasize the urgency of *Rue Transnonain*, to see in it – to see it as – a struggle with permanence. “Even the dead will not be safe from the enemy”:¹¹⁹ Daumier knew this well; he knew that taking control of memory meant pulling its wreckage out of danger, not to restore it, not to say “this is how it really was” – not, as it were, to pull it out of history – but to tie it down, to ensure that nothing would be lost to history; he knew, perhaps above all, that in the end these battles – raucous, stinking of death, soaked in blood – were fought out with pens and crayons, amid ruins always threatening to disappear, in (and over) silence.

*Depuis long-temps déjà les sanglots de la souffrance, les cris de la douleur physique s'élevaient vers le ciel comme une voix immense.
Mais le temps n'était pas venu où le ciel devait entendre.
La voix morale, qui doit parler pour obtenir les grands changements, était muette encore.
L'esclave, dont le corps était sillonné par les lanières sanglantes du maître, se tordait dans son supplice; mais il était abruti. Ses regards restaient fixés sur la terre, et il ne pouvait sortir de l'individualisme, qui était justement la loi par laquelle il souffrait.”*
– P.-A. Jeanron, *Espérance pour le peuple*, 1834.¹²⁰

Rue Transnonain presents a particular challenge to description. The difficulty has little to do with the lithograph's lurid content – as with *Tuerie*, violence *per se* is not what arrests speech – and everything to do with its matter-of-factness. *Rue Transnonain* asserts itself as representation, but disables metaphor. Philipon and Baudelaire surely struggled with the paradox: Philipon responded with unusual reticence; Baudelaire recalled an overturned chamber pot. The challenge, then, is one of fidelity, of seeing and describing as representation but also against representation. Again, the question is not about getting “the facts” straight, or of judging the truth or falsity of *Rue Transnonain* by

¹¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings volume 4, 1938-1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003), p. 391.

¹²⁰ Jeanron, *Espérance pour le peuple* (Paris, 1834), p. 1.

measuring it against some reality external to the work itself. Those facts at any rate were in dispute, so much ammunition for a media battle Ledru-Rollin hoped to disarm, to disfigure.¹²¹ In question, rather, is the kind of visibility *Rue Transnonain* makes possible.

To describe *Rue Transnonain* we have to keep its ground in sight – not only as an aesthetic form, but as an indomitable force, the negative of uprightness, the determinations of the social totality, the unexceptional. Groundedness, to put it still otherwise, is the picture’s challenge, to description but also to history, to what enables visibility as much as to what precludes it. *Rue Transnonain* challenges the way things are – the way things appear – by leaving them practically unchanged, by staging, instead, a collision of opposites: the terrible and the trivial, the routine and the catastrophic, history and the business of caricature, the public and the private, the aesthetic and the social, the visible and the silent, power and violence, a symbolic system, expertly formed, that short-circuits its own machinery. These contradictions are internal and external, in the work and in society; *Rue Transnonain* works through and on them, against and with them; it makes them impossible to ignore. In short, *Rue Transnonain* does not reproduce history; it uncovers it, lays it flat. Only here the lithograph comes to history the day after, moments before the return of action, which will change its look. The lithograph, nevertheless, does not have the character of pity; it turns indignation against rhetoric, against Jeanron’s “voix morale.” Everything in *Rue Transnonain* has been brought to a stop.

Daumier had surely seen *Tuerie* before putting crayon to stone. He and Préault had been close since they met at the Académie Suisse in the 1820s – it was at the same time and in the same place, incidentally, that the two of them also befriended Jeanron – and, together with Jeanron, were among the founding members of the *Société libre des Beaux-Arts*. If accounts are correct, Daumier tacked an impression of Célestin Nanteuil’s lithograph of *Parias* – dedicated “à son ami Préault” – to his largely unadorned studio wall.¹²² He seems to have disagreed with his friend, however, on what *tuerie* ought to look like. At least he had formed a differing view of the matter after April 14th. Daumier seems to have thought, nevertheless, that Préault got the basic question right. He seems to have agreed that *tuerie* – its form, its violence, its materiality, its contradictions – had to be understood in relation to its ground, a spatial orientation that, for the one as for the other, actualized the orientation of politics, made politics workable, negatable. For both, moreover, the it expressed a determination – a general set of limits and pressures, aesthetic and historical – that had to be exposed to itself if it was to be seen differently, if it was to be re-formed. For Préault, that meant detonating it, slicing a way through it, rendering it unappropriable, a possibility – a potentiality – only because absent: a totality that could never be. For Daumier, the ground alone could secure the ordinary – fragmentary, powerless, always in danger – against disaster and oblivion. He sought to clog up the apparatus of totality by amassing its detritus, making the one and the other

¹²¹ Marrinan argues that the volatility of contested facts underlies both Philipon’s reticence and Daumier’s choice of the 15th; both, he says, were trying to avoid the censors. See Marrinan, *Romantic Paris*, pp. 360-362.

¹²² Théodore de Banville, *Mes Souvenirs* (Paris, 1882), p. 174. Apparently, Daumier’s studio also housed Préault’s *Un jeune comédien romain égorgé par deux esclaves*, a relief from 1830 (Millard, p. 16). According to Adolphe Tabarant, Préault was among the select few, often the first, to whom Daumier showed his paintings, “parce qu’il est l’un des plus près de son cœur” (*La Vie artistique au temps de Baudelaire* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1963), p. 245).

visible – part of the same world – by warding off the disturbance of speech and the din of moving parts.

Ground mattered in 1834. It was the medium of politics; it was the terrain of social struggle; it was the substance of history. It was a battlefield. Only the battle was different on either side of rue Transnonain. April changed the texture of these grounds; it gave them the consistency of gravel – there but pliable, formless, useless. Power tends to find a way of reasserting itself: not always by brute force; often by the most refined.¹²³

The Monarchy needed to expel *Rue Transnonain* from the public's view; censorship laws, however, compelled it to wait until after the print's release. Regardless, the Monarchy's campaign against *Rue Transnonain* by and large succeeded; only a small number of proofs escaped the *gendarmes* waiting eagerly to burn them. No matter. Quantity, dissemination, circulation: these were the real threats; they were why the lithographic stone had to be destroyed as well. By the time Baudelaire wrote about *Rue Transnonain* in 1857, impressions of it had long since become a rarity, a collector's item with a steadily rising price tag. The next fourteen years were no more auspicious for Préault. *Tuerie* was the last work he would have accepted to the Salon until 1848, when Jeanron became *directeur des Musées nationaux* and, for the year at least, dissolved the jury system. He had moderately better luck finding commissions, but they arrived only intermittently; time and again, he was forced to turn to David d'Angers for help – to beg him for work, to beg him to intercede. His studio grew increasingly cluttered, which obliged him to sculpt and destroy simultaneously; one by one *Mendicité*, *Misère*, and *Parias* were reduced to dust. *Tuerie* survived – why we cannot say – and in 1850, when resources had become available, Préault had it cast before sending it back to the Salon. Critics responded more or less as they did in 1834. Only now, in 1851, *Tuerie* was “fameuse”:¹²⁴ “la chose avait paru féroce pendant les années les plus enragées du romantisme.”¹²⁵ *Tuerie* had solidified into an emblem from another time, its destructive character, once deserving of public execution, now fixed in bronze; it had become a part of tradition. Critics in 1851 nevertheless (perhaps I should say “fittingly” or “accordingly”) found *Tuerie* even more unintelligible than they did in 1834; the lacunae had deepened and widened.¹²⁶ “Comment!” Joseph Méry blustered in *La Mode*, “s'est-on dit entre admirateurs, comment! c'est Préault, cet homme si charmant, si spirituel, si léger! c'est lui qui a mis au monde cette épouvantable vision.”¹²⁷ “C'est de l'art pour l'art, une forme vide et morte,” sneered Rochery.¹²⁸ Prosper Haussard saw vengeance in the bronze, reparation for a decade of institutional oppression; for the critic of *Le*

¹²³ Benjamin, “The Destructive Character,” p. 542.

¹²⁴ Théodore de Banville, “Le Salon de 1851,” *Le Pouvoir*, 10 January 1851.

¹²⁵ Gautier, “Salon de 1850-51,” *La Presse*, May 1, 1851.

¹²⁶ “Je signalerai seulement, dans ce bas-relief, quelques endroits vides et des lacunes,” wrote Paul Mantz. “C'est comme si les étroites mailles du filet se brisaient” (“Le Salon,” *L'Événement*, April 13, 1851). Or Louis de Geofroy: “Il fait une *Tuerie*, fragment d'un grand bas-relief. Ne connaissant pas l'ensemble, nous ne pouvons rien comprendre à ce morceau, où se trouvent pêle-mêle entassés des têtes grimaçantes, des bras sortant on ne sait d'où, des mains qui n'appartiennent à aucun corps. Tout cela se mord, s'égratigne sans nous dire pourquoi, et produit exactement l'effet d'un cauchemar” (“Le Salon de 1850,” *Revue des deux mondes* (March 1, 1851): p. 959).

¹²⁷ Méry, “Salon de 1850,” *La Mode* (May 17, 1851): p. 303.

¹²⁸ Rochery, p. 457.

National, *Tuerie* embodied “l’esprit quarante-huitard.”¹²⁹ Gautier, who otherwise strayed little from what he had written seventeen years earlier, no longer saw “bataille”; at least he could not say it, even had he wanted to, in the pages of *La Presse*. No one considered *Tuerie*’s return in light of June; the coincidence – that repetition – went unnoticed. No one spoke of the wounds.

¹²⁹ Haussard, “Salon de 1850-1851,” *Le National*, April 11, 1851.

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION TO CIVIL WAR

The confrontations which arise out of the very conditions of bourgeois society must be fought out, they cannot be imagined away.¹

– Karl Marx, in “The June Revolution,” June 29, 1848.

Celui que l’on ne veut pas connaître comme être politique, on commence par ne pas le voir comme porteur des signes de la politicalité, par ne pas comprendre ce qu’il dit, par ne pas entendre que c’est un discours qui sort de sa bouche.²

– Jacques Rancière, in “Dix thèses sur la politique,” 1996.

L’essentiel est sans cesse menacé par l’insignifiant.³

– René Char, in *A une sérénité crispée*, 1951.

All reification is forgetting.⁴

– Th. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1944.

Ernest Meissonier’s *Souvenir de guerre civile* (fig. 27) offers a decidedly bleak view of rebellion’s aftermath. A small painting – it measures only 29 x 22 cm – it depicts the scattered remains of a vanquished barricade, behind which the corpses of those who once defended it now lie. Having suffered a violent, sudden end, most of these men – workers no doubt – have collapsed in crowded clusters, each lifeless body slumped over or propped up by the next; a few others have fallen at the curbsides, or on the barricade itself, their bodies forced into ungraceful poses by the unyielding surfaces beneath them. The result is a dense web of interwoven bodies that renders it difficult, at times, to determine which limb belongs to which man. Lumped together in this way, these men

¹ Marx, “The June Revolution,” in *The Revolutions of 1848: Political Writings Volume 1*, ed. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2010), p. 133. Marx’s report was originally published in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*.

² Rancière, “Dix thèses sur la politique,” in *Aux bords du politique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), p. 243.

³ Char, *A une sérénité crispée*, in *Recherche de la base et du sommet* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 162.

⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 191.

have been rent of what makes them individual and whole. Union, in this instance, is imagined as a coming together while coming undone.

Directly behind this “omelette d’hommes,” as one critic referred to the agglomeration of bodies,⁵ we see that a segment of the street has been denuded of its pavement; here is the quarry from which these insurgents gathered the materials for their fateful redoubt. Excavated in the hope that some better world might lie beneath the surface, this trench now suggests nothing so much as the common grave to which these men will likely be relegated. In this narrow street lined with impoverished, blank façades and thick with corpses, everything has been reduced to a funereal stillness and silence. The windows have been boarded up; the shops are shut; the street’s one gas lamp has been extinguished. Only a single window shutter on the second floor, slightly ajar, reminds us that life once went on as usual in the rue Geoffrey de l’Asnier. At present, not a soul stirs in this street that is at once so ordinary and yet so haunting. These men have been hemmed in, as it were, by their own attempt at meaningful resistance, their broken bodies – miniaturized, detailed, crystalline – trapped in a deadlock with the dreary monotony of the built environment. Death has a repellent beauty in the picture; the city has none.

The barricade, for Meissonier, is a site of failure, not to say futility. His picture, accordingly, offers a stern warning to rebels of the future. Yet, for all its forthrightness, for all the venom in its recrimination, the painting stops short of stridency. It does not scold; it does not curse. The fate of the rebel, to be sure, is nowhere in doubt; nor, for that matter, are our presumed loyalties. Here’s where we stand. There’s where they lie. So much is clear. Still, the painting itself appears oddly restrained, even reticent or obdurate. Its description is impassive, its image crisp and hard, as if all that needs to be known lies open on the surface. To Meissonier’s critics, the blunt matter-of-factness of the painting indicated an absence of *parti pris*, a transcending of politics – “laissons-lui la neutralité de l’art,” Louis Peisse noted.⁶ Here were the realities of civil war described in flat, impartial prose: “c’est une page d’histoire exacte comme un procès verbal,” Gautier maintained, “sans emphases, sans rhétorique, un spécimen de cette vérité vraie que personne ne veut dire, pas plus les peintres que les écrivains; la Morgue de l’émeute prise au daguerréotype, le détritüs d’une révolution sur le pavé de la ville, du sang, des haillons et de maigres cadavres vides.”⁷ A praiseworthy quality, disinterestedness in Gautier’s account nevertheless has a destructive effect; it obliterates. “Cette vérité vraie” translates into “détritüs,” “haillons,” “cadavres vides” – the facts of rebellion, to borrow T. J. Clark’s apt formulation, prised apart from their value.⁸ It is not the struggle of men we see in Meissonier’s picture but the condition of things; he shows us still life, *nature morte*. The painting, then, hinges on a paradox, for the realization of significance coincides with its abolition; it negates itself through its opposite in order to be. That is to say, representation in *Souvenir de guerre civile* performs a specific operation: the picture keeps its rebels silent by making them visible. And it is the picture’s silence – the deadliness of its accuracy – that generates the most noise.

⁵ François Sabatier-Ungher, *Salon de 1851* (Paris, 1851), p. 57.

⁶ Peisse, “Salon de 1850-1851,” *Le Constitutionnelle*, March 2, 1851.

⁷ Gautier, “Salon de 1850-1851,” *La Presse*, April 10, 1851.

⁸ Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, p. 27.

By the time civil war broke out on June 23, 1848, the dynamics of barricade fighting had changed. Previous barricade events – 1830, 1832, 1834, February 1848 – had all targeted a single enemy, Monarchy. The illusion of common cause, that is, worked to subsume divergent political and social interests, albeit in varying degrees at different historical conjunctures. At no point, however, had the alliance of classes been accorded as singular a significance as it was in February 1848, when a re-unified “people” forced Louis-Philippe’s abdication and dissolved the July Monarchy. The reconciliation of classes, worker and bourgeois marching hand-in-hand under the banner of universal Fraternity, emerged retroactively as the revolution’s organizing principle, casting into shadow the pervasive social antagonisms that shaped civil life under the “citizen King.” For those trying to determine the meaning of the Revolution, then, the February barricades provided a symbol of restitution rather than division, an overcoming of the Monarchy’s corrupt politics and, or so the *quarant-huitards* thought, the illusion of class hostility it engendered: “la Monarchie croyait avoir formé deux peuples ennemis,” *La Réforme* exulted; “mais ils se sont reconnus dans les barricades.”⁹

Paris’s print industry responded quickly, churning out lithograph after lithograph to corroborate the message: the fortifying embrace of worker, bourgeois, and National Guard (“L’Union fait la force!”); workers baring their breasts as they repeat the refrain “Tirez donc si vous voulez”; all of Paris posing triumphantly around a barricade surmounted by allegorical figures of Liberty, Unity, Solidarity, Friendship, the Republic.¹⁰ The seductiveness of these images was irresistible; here, it seemed, the collectivism of Rousseau’s social contract, his vision of a political body in which each of its members formed an indivisible part of the whole, had found its true expression. The danger of disagreement nevertheless lurked within these airy approximations of shared victory and “universal sympathy”; for just as the Republic introduced a new horizon of politics, so too, in Marx’s words, had it “uncovered the head of the monster itself by striking aside the protective, concealing crown.”¹¹ This staging of transfiguration, as it were, turned on the power of these images to affirm the legacy of the Revolution – to announce its fulfillment – while masking its limits, the as yet “undeveloped” contradictions and conflicts that, Marx says, remained dormant, a mere background of words and phrases, until June. “Generous as ever, [the people] imagined it had destroyed its enemy when it had only overthrown the enemy of its enemy, the *common* enemy.”

Unlike the barricades that preceded them, then, those raised in June stood opposed to a different kind of enemy, an enemy construed as such not because of the political form it took – the June rebels no more than those who annihilated them cherished the ideals of republicanism – but because of its restrictedness, because the leaders of the

⁹ *La Réforme*, March 9, 1848. See also *L’Ordre public, journal des barricades*, March 2, 1848. *L’Ordre public, journal des barricades* was one among many of the Second Republic’s single-issue newspapers. Written by Eugène Blanc, indicted under the July Monarchy for press offenses, *L’Ordre public* is of particular interest for the way it tries to reconcile “public order” and “the barricade.” For Blanc, the February barricades overthrew a regime of social disorder – the July Monarchy – and put in its place a regime of public order founded on the principles of unity and trust.

¹⁰ On the prints of ’48, see Ségolène Le Men, “Les images de l’année 1848 dans la ‘République des arts,’” in *Les révolutions de 1848: l’Europe des images* (Paris: Assemblée nationale, 1998), pp. 29-63.

¹¹ Karl Marx, “The June Revolution,” p. 131.

Republic claimed identity between themselves and those they represented. In the heady days of late February and early March, the inchoate Second Republic leaned heavily on the vocabulary of unity, insisting, on the one hand, that sovereignty devolve to “the people” and consenting, on the other, to surround itself with robust social institutions. Within days the Provisional Government established National Workshops to assist Paris’s unemployed; it democratized the National Guard; it set up the Luxembourg Commission (*La Commission de Gouvernement pour les travailleurs*) to examine the conditions of labor and to find the most expedient ways of improving them; it declared a “right to work,” which was to ensure that the laboring classes enjoy the “bénéfice légitime de leur travail.”¹² The list goes on: the Provisional Government abolished censorship, the death penalty for political offenses, slavery. On March 5, in one of its most celebrated, if star-crossed acts, it expanded the franchise to all men over the age of 21; property qualifications and restrictions based on capacity were now a thing of the past. Henceforth, France would be a democracy unlike any other, a *République démocratique et sociale*.

The *printemps des peuples* would be short-lived. By mid-March that same Provisional Government was already pulling the reins on the social Republic, accruing to itself an independent and inviolable moral authority that would eventually pit representative against represented, government against people.¹³ The telltale sign came on March 17 when the Parisian clubs, wishing to compel the Provisional Government to postpone elections to both the National Assembly and the National Guard, marched through the capital. The demands were simple, even modest: relocate all regular troops outside the city walls and defer the elections by three months, thus affording the clubs time to organize and educate the newly empowered electorate.¹⁴ Alphonse de Lamartine’s stark refusal to see legitimacy in their actions portended a disconcerting future:

Que pourrions-nous opposer? Rien qu’une seule chose:
votre raison même! cette puissance de la raison générale
qui se place seule ici entre vous et nous, qui nous inspire et
qui vous arrête devant nous! C’est cette force morale

¹² *Le Moniteur universel*, February 26, 1848. The proclamation, signed by Garnier-Pagès and Louis Blanc, reads: “Le Gouvernement provisoire de la République française s’engage à garantir l’existence de l’ouvrier par le travail. Il s’engage à garantir du travail à tous les citoyens. Il reconnaît que les ouvriers doivent s’associer entre eux pour jouir du bénéfice légitime de leur travail. Le Gouvernement provisoire rend aux ouvriers, auxquels ils appartient, le million qui va échoir de la liste civile.”

¹³ “Vous sentez comme nous, comme nous en qui le peuple a mis sa confiance et s’est personnifié le jour du combat et de la victoire, qu’il n’y a de gouvernement possible qu’à la condition que vous ayez la confiance et la raison de conférer une autorité morale à ce gouvernement. L’autorité morale de ce gouvernement, qu’est-ce autre chose, non-seulement pour lui, mais pour le peuple, pour le public, pour les départements, pour l’Europe qui nous regarde, qu’est-ce autre chose que son indépendance complète de toute pression extérieure? Voilà l’indépendance du gouvernement, voilà sa dignité, voilà son unique force morale, sachez-le bien.” Lamartine, “Réponse aux délégués de diverses corporations et clubs venant au nom du peuple demander: 1° l’éloignement des troupes; 2° l’ajournement au 5 avril des élections de la garde nationale; 3° l’ajournement au 31 mai des élections pour l’Assemblée nationale,” in *La France parlementaire (1834-1851): œuvres oratoires et écrits politiques*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1865), p. 209.

¹⁴ See Peter H. Amann, *Revolution and Mass Democracy: The Paris Club Movement in 1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 101-110.

invisible et cependant toute-puissante qui nous rend calmes nous-mêmes, indépendants et dignes en face de cette masse qui entoure ce palais du peuple défendu par sa seule inviolabilité.¹⁵

By opposing “la raison générale” – that is, the general will of “the people” as arbiter and therefore the very basis of legitimate government – to “cette masse,” a term loaded with vitriol and accusations of factionalism, Lamartine made plain the contradiction on which the politics of the Second Republic rested: for the voice of “the people” to be heard, for it to become truly sovereign and inviolable, the people themselves had to hold their tongues.¹⁶ “Prenez garde à des réunions de ce genre,” Lamartine warned, “...le dix-huit brumaire du peuple pourrait amener, contre son gré, le dix-huit brumaire du depotisme, et ni vous ni nous nous n’en voulons.”¹⁷ When the April elections returned a conservative majority – indeed, little more than a reprise of the Assemblies of old – the reins that had begun to tighten on the 17th hardened into chains. By June, and following the débâcle of May 15, when a march by the Parisian clubs – this time, Polish independence provided the ostensible *mot d’ordre* – morphed into an *ad hoc* putsch, the tides had definitively turned.¹⁸ Having grown weary, on the one hand, of the expense paid out each day to the unemployed and fearful, on the other, of the hundred thousand workers that gathered every morning on the Champs de Mars – the so-called “boulevard du Socialisme”¹⁹ – the National Assembly, on June 22, issued a proclamation that effectively dissolved the National Workshops. The “right to work,” to be sure, had never been much more than a half-measure put in place to placate a working class still eager to make good on its recent victory.²⁰ Few among the governing ranks could see the “organization of labor” as anything but a socialist fantasy; others vilified it as an outright attack on property. Still, promises were promises, and this promise more than others demonstrated to those who had fought on the barricades that the Republic had committed itself to protecting the well-being of “the people” – that 1848, in other words, would not go the way of 1830. By

¹⁵ Lamartine, “Réponse aux délégués,” p. 210.

¹⁶ James Livesey, “Speaking the Nation: Radical Republicans and the Failure of Political Communication in 1848,” *French Historical Studies* vol. 20, no. 3 (Summer 1997): p. 476.

¹⁷ Lamartine, “Réponse aux délégués,” p. 213.

¹⁸ On the *journée* of May 15, see Amann, pp. 205-247.

¹⁹ P.-J. Proudhon, *Les confessions d’un révolutionnaire* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002), p. 144.

²⁰ In an address to the National Assembly on September 14, 1848, Lamartine explained that the Provisional Government established the National Workshops as a short-term response to inherited economic circumstances and practical necessity – they were never meant to be, in other words, a “system,” one which the Government would be held responsible. Any such promise, according to Lamartine, would have been impractical, never mind reckless and misleading: “...jamais nous ne fanatiserions le peuple avec des prestiges d’idées qui ne contenaient aucune vérité, aucune réalité, qui ne contenaient que du vent et des tempêtes.” In his defense of some such right, Lamartine sought to reimagine the “right to work” as a “right to existence,” a protection first and foremost against hunger; the organization of labor, for him, was “une chose entièrement illusoire, imaginaire, chimérique, une ruine de tout le capital, un attentat à toute société et à la propriété.” See Lamartine, “Sur le droit au travail,” in *La France parlementaire (1834-1851): œuvres oratoires et écrits politiques*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1865), pp. 410-427.

ordering the closure of the National Workshops, the Republic, in the eyes of Workshop enlistees, abrogated this commitment, thereby forfeiting its claim to represent them.²¹

The proclamation of June 22 offered the workers who relied on the Workshops for a daily wage one of two options. Able-bodied enlistees between ages 17 and 25 were pressed to sign up for the army; those unwilling or unfit to serve were to be shipped off to the provinces to perform road work, ditch canals, or drain marshes. Deadening piecework somewhere else, in other words, was the offer – that was what remained of the Republic’s guarantee of “l’existence de l’ouvrier par le travail.” The message was all too clear. And indeed, it was the latter of the two options – forced deportation from the capital, forced dislocation, forced alienation – that set revolt in motion.²² That evening, a regiment of Workshop enlistees, led by Louis Pujol, marched to the Luxembourg, the seat of Alexandre Marie’s Ministry of Public Works, to protest the lot they had been cast. Marie was firm, unapologetic, uncompromising. Rebuffed, Pujol and his men responded in kind: “On n’part pas!”²³ The next day barricades went up around the eastern districts of the city.

The barricades of June had, as it were, a defensive dimension to them; they were raised, on the one hand, to assert the worker’s “right to the city” and, on the other, to safeguard the Republic against *faux amis*²⁴ – in short, against enclosure. Republic faced off against Republic, in other words, or rather one image of the Republic, “la communauté,” confronted another, “la propriété.” It would prove a fight to the death. The June Days, I am suggesting, erupted as a kind of turf war, a struggle over the right to be present and to have that presence speak, to have it be meaningful and determinative and authoritative – a right, that is, to represent oneself. “On n’part pas!” By refusing to comply with the demands of their representatives, the June rebels thereby exercised a kind of democracy the Second Republic had not made room for; this was democracy as disobedience, contradiction, right of veto. Marx called the insurrection the first great class war;²⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville called it a slave war;²⁶ Lamartine called it sedition.²⁷ Incapable of seeing the *demos* in the mob – of seeing, that is, beyond a government elected by the very same “people” who now rose up against it – Hugo considered the insurrection more or less incomprehensible, “un fait à part, et presque impossible à classer dans la philosophie de l’histoire.”²⁸ For the anonymous men and women behind

²¹ See Charles Schmidt, *Les journées de juin 1848* (Paris: Hachette, 1926). Schmidt refers to the June Days as a “bataille entre le parlementaire et l’émeute.”

²² A.-J. Delaage, *Journées de juin 1848, écrites devant et derrière les barricades par des témoins oculaires* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1848), p. 11.

²³ Hippolyte Castille, *Les massacres de juin 1848* (Paris: Les principaux librairies, 1869), p. 6. See also Delaage, p. 12.

²⁴ Marianne Cayatte and Philippe Oulmont, “Un demi-siècle d’insurrections et de barricades,” in *Histoire des gauches en France*, vol. 1, eds. Jean-Jacques Becker and Gilles Candar (Paris: La Découverte, 2004), p. 172.

²⁵ Marx, *Class Struggles in France*, p. 56.

²⁶ Tocqueville, *Souvenirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p. 182.

²⁷ Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1852), p. 450.

²⁸ Hugo, *Les Misérables*, pp. 6-8.

the barricades, it was an “insurrection de la faim.”²⁹ Needless to say, the stakes were high. “The people” had splintered; it was at war with itself.

Une nation dans la nation: Stern had a point. The aporia of “the people” derives from an unresolvable contradiction, or semantic ambiguity, central to its political meaning. There can be, as it were, no single, coherent referent for “the people”; it does not constitute an identity – homogeneous, consistent, absolute – nor does it possess a collective voice. “The people,” rather, refers at once to two divergent social bodies, probably more. On the one hand, “the people” is an inclusive concept and denotes an integral body politic; in theory, it designates a social totality without remainder. On the other hand, the concept is radically exclusive, rooted in the maldistribution of political power and material resources; according to this usage, “the people” forms a subset that comprises nothing but remainder: “the people” here signifies the destitute, the marginal, the vanquished, the *déclassé* – in short, the part that has no part. Properly construed, “the people” is neither wholly the former nor the latter, but both; a fundamentally split concept, it speaks to a double movement, or dialectical relation, between its two poles, between inclusion and exclusion, dividedness and unity, unlimited expansion and expulsion, political abstraction and sociological specificity. “The people,” then, exists at once as a political proposition – “the people” as totality, as transcending social distinctions – and a producer of social difference. Where the one is given form by the unity it expresses – “the people” as Nation – the other is contingent, unpredictable, fragmented, shapeless, *informe*. Where the one is universal or universalizing, the other is situational, a historical phenomenon.

“The people,” in a word, is never a thing – positive, definable almost mathematically – but a provisional object of political discourse and social ideology: “the question of the People is a question about representation.”³⁰ Accordingly, “the people” tends not to make itself seen or heard by direct means; its appearance is always already mediated. The exception to this rule – indeed the exception that proves the rule – are moments of revolt, deliberate acts of contradiction and negation, moments when, in other words, “the people” defies those who represent it or the representations to which it has hitherto been made to conform. Even then, however, social reality and representation are not so much prised apart as pushed into a different configuration; the relationship between them gets re-formed. Revolt drives representation to the point of crisis – “On n’part pas!” – for “the people” in revolt is “the people” struggling to make itself known, to emerge from the invisibility to which systems of representation have consigned it; revolt defines politics as rupture, difference, inconsistency. As such, it points up the insubstantiality of “the people” as conceptual ideal, strikes at its fallible form, producing

²⁹ Schmidt, p. 10. See also François Pardigon, *Épisodes des journées de juin 1848* (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2008).

³⁰ T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 47.

fissures in an otherwise universalizing language of political and natural rights, *les droits de l'homme et du citoyen*.³¹

The point is this: the February Revolution reoriented the framework within which “the people” had come to be known and understood. Central to its recasting was the institution of universal (manhood) suffrage. If the image of “the people” re-united on the barricade furnished the Revolution’s meaning-makers with a virtual antidote to the divisions exacerbated by the social organization of the July Monarchy, universal suffrage provided the means by which social healing might be institutionalized as a politics. Thanks to universal suffrage, “the people” was welcomed into political existence and granted, at least in letter, participatory parity. Consequently, “the people,” as a social designation, took on a peculiar specificity, or rather forfeited any hope of specificity of all. To be of “the people” was, after March 5, to be of civil society, to be of a redeemed social totality that presaged a national future free from social antagonism and, as it were, revolution.³² In a declaration of March 19, the Provisional Government expressed in no uncertain terms what it perceived to be the radical import of an unlimited franchise: “La loi électorale provisoire que nous avons faite est la plus large qui, chez aucun peuple de la terre, ait jamais convoqué le peuple à l’exercice du suprême droit de l’homme, sa propre souveraineté. L’élection appartient à tous sans exception. À dater de cette loi, il n’y a plus de prolétaire en France.”³³ This last sentence is the most revealing, for it lends formal equality a social dimension by correlating the question of suffrage and the issue of social division. Universal suffrage, as Pierre Rosanvallon says, assumed a sacramental power; it was seen as a “rite de passage, un cérémonial de l’inclusion.”³⁴ No longer the poor and excluded “the people,” after March 1848, was rebaptised “the French people”³⁵ – that is, a new universal class without class, one that rendered meaningless the usual terms by which “the people” was stratified.³⁶

³¹ My reflections on “the people” owe a great deal to four sources: Giorgio Agamben, “What is a People?” in *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 29-34; Rancière, “Dix thèses sur la politique,” pp. 223-254; Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le peuple introuvable: histoire de la représentation démocratique en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998); and Jonsson, *A Brief History of the Masses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

³² Ledru-Rollin, “Instruction circulaire adressée comme Ministre de l’Intérieur aux commissaires de la République dans les départements, sur le concours à prêter par eux aux élections à l’Assemblée Nationale (8 avril 1848),” in *Discours politiques et écrits divers*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1879), pp. 16-21.

³³ *Le Bulletin de la République*, March 19, 1848.

³⁴ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen: histoire du suffrage universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 376.

³⁵ The suggestion of a rebirth is not my own. As the April elections approached, *Le Bulletin de la République* noted, “La République, qui n’exclut aucun de ses fils, vous appelle tous à la vie politique; c’est pour vous comme une naissance nouvelle, un baptême, une régénération” (*Le Bulletin de la République*, March 30, 1848).

³⁶ For Lamartine, this was the revolution’s primary mission: “1848 et le gouvernement républicain, ne l’oubliez pas, ont une mission plus belle encore. Je ne me servirai pas de ces mots qui m’offensent chaque fois que je les entends ici, ou que je les lis dans des écrits incitateurs d’une classe contre une autre; je ne me servirai pas de ce mot de bourgeoisie, je ne le connais plus; et il n’y a plus ni bourgeois ni prolétaires, il y a un peuple. Votre mission, celle de 1848, c’est d’élever, d’extraire, d’inaugurer, de régulariser non plus

This claim for politics – that a common political culture rooted in universal suffrage would, in the end, translate into social unity – points to the constitutive dilemma of post-Revolutionary republicanism, both its horizon and its limit. For the actualization of social unity by political means had its price. Although celebrated at the time as the reconciliation of “the people’s two bodies,” the institution of universal suffrage, in effect, did little more than superimpose a political abstraction on an implacable social reality.³⁷ Opening the doors to the *pays legal* – indeed, abolishing it as a political practice and legal distinction – was much less about encouraging the newly enfranchised to act on their true diversity – that is, to realize the kind of pluralism democracy ought to enable – than it was about establishing a social pact and a national consensus. Even the most cursory survey of *Le Bulletin de la République*, the official organ of the new administration, demonstrates that the Provisional Government’s most pressing concern in the first months after the Revolution was to secure the future of the republican form in the coming elections; warnings to “the people” against the machinations of both the counter-revolutionary Right and the radical Left saturate nearly every issue. Beware, beware, circular after circular reads; trust not the landed Lord, nor the chimera of “*communisme*.” Ledru-Rollin’s effusive report on the Festival of Fraternity, held three days before the elections, converts these warnings into a potent image of consolidation:

La journée du 20 avril a scellé le pacte de la fraternité entre tous les éléments du peuple, le peuple et l’armée: le peuple qui travaille dans l’intérieur de Paris à tous les arts industriels, et le peuple qui travaille autour de Paris au développement de l’agriculture; le peuple jeune et ardent qui brandit avec fierté des armes brillantes, et le peuple mûr qui a traversé les orages du passé et qui ne combat pas qu’avec le prestige de ses souvenirs et la moralité de ses enseignements; les enfants du peuple qui vont grandir au souffle vivifiant de la liberté: les femmes du peuple qui ont le coeur aussi grand que leurs époux et leurs pères, quand le mot de République les fait tressaillir. Tous les éléments, toutes les nuances, tous les aspects, toutes les aspirations, toutes les conquêtes, toutes les forces vives de cet être multiple qu’on appelle le peuple, ont comparu le 20 avril sur la scène de l’histoire pour annoncer au monde que la solution de tous les problèmes de la politique ne pèsent pas plus qu’un grain de sable dans sa main puissante.

La science politique est trouvée maintenant. Elle ne s’est pas révélée à un seul, elle s’est révélée à tous le jour où la République a proclamé le principe de la souveraineté de

seulement une classe de la population, mais le peuple tout entier; c’est de créer par vos lois de finances et d’économie politique, comme nous l’avons fait dès le premier jour heureusement par notre loi de suffrage universel, c’est d’éteindre toutes ces divisions entre les classes.” Lamartine, “Sur le droit au travail,” p. 426.

³⁷ Rosanvallon, *Le peuple introuvable*, p. 40.

tous. Cette science politique sera désormais d'une application grande et simple. Il ne s'agira que de convoquer le peuple par grandes masses, le souverain tout entier, et d'invoquer le consentement unanime, dans ces questions où la conscience populaire parle avec tant d'éloquence et d'ensemble par acclamation.

Cette voix de la multitude, cette voix du peuple qu'on a toujours appelée la voix de Dieu, elle a prononcé son oracle FRATERNITÉ, INDIVISIBILITÉ. Le peuple ne veut pas qu'on le désunisse, il ne veut pas qu'on le trompe. Il pardonne à tout le passé, mais pour l'avenir il n'a qu'un cri: LA RÉPUBLIQUE!³⁸

For Ledru-Rollin, who, as Minister of the Interior, edited *Le Bulletin*, the Festival of Fraternity presented irrefutable proof that *national* unity, a social totality without limits, had been reestablished. The French people – “cet être multiple” – was no hydra, then, its internal diversity threatening to disintegrate into a proliferating array of competing vital functions, but a convocation of brothers and sisters united in nature as in history, by its discovery, as it were, of a common voice, the voice of “la conscience populaire” and therefore the voice of reason, of man’s essential goodness. The Parisian press concurred, *Le National* proclaiming in boisterous fashion “qu’il n’y avait plus de division d’aucune espèce dans la grande famille française.”³⁹

“À dater de cette loi, il n’y a plus de prolétaire en France.” The Provisional Government’s image of universal suffrage turned on the compatibility of formal democracy with Rousseau’s mandate for an inalienable and indivisible body politic, without which “the people” would lose its quality as “the people.”⁴⁰ To call oneself “prolétaire” after March 5, then, was to insist on the continued prevalence of social difference and social dividedness – on a disharmony of interests – within the regenerated Nation. It was to challenge the symbol universal suffrage had become; indeed, it was to question it as such, to identify it as a constructive action that de-substantialized the object – “the people,” the general will, popular sovereignty – it purported to describe. That is to say, it was to belie the whole which universal suffrage was believed to express, to expose it as a dis-figuration of the social, a conversion of social value – “l’essence de la raison populaire,” as Proudhon put it – into a specious sum of so many partial numbers.⁴¹ “On nous a ramenés aux usages des barbares”: as Proudhon saw it, universal suffrage abounded in metaphysical properties; it had the character of a fetish. In return for the sacrifice of individual agency, it promised formal equality before the law.⁴²

³⁸ *Le Bulletin de la République*, April 22, 1848.

³⁹ *Le National*, April 22, 1848.

⁴⁰ See Ledru-Rollin, *Du gouvernement direct du peuple* (Paris, 1851), pp. 5-7.

⁴¹ Proudhon, “Mystification du suffrage universel,” *Le Représentant du peuple*, April 30, 1848. See also, Proudhon, “La Démocratie,” in *Solution du problème social* (Paris, 1848), pp. 54-64. The article is dated March 26, 1848.

⁴² On this equation, see Jacques Julliard, “Le Peuple,” in *Les lieux de mémoire. Les France III, de l’archive à l’emblème*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), pp. 184-229.

To put it another way, universal suffrage, under the pretense of political inclusion and social integration, drove a wedge between the right to vote and the realities of social life. “The people,” along with the Republic, called on the “prolétaire” to fade into invisibility; the security of one, like the other, rested on the assimilation of pluralism to division and dispersal.⁴³ The Republic, that is, counted on “the people” to remain a “compact” form, which is to say, a mere semblance of unity, with only the willingness of its constituents to surrender to the new system of representation – to see “la vraie formule de la souveraineté” in votes cast “par tête, *viritim*...par des combinaisons d’atômes”⁴⁴ – to bind it together.⁴⁵ Proudhon had no illusions: “la classe travailleuse entend participer à tous les avantages de la classe bourgeoise.” “Dès ce moment, il a été facile de prévoir dans quel sens seraient faites les élections.”

The official response to the elections was largely positive. Voting had occurred without incident, *Le Bulletin* happily reported, adding that the Provisional Government anticipated a smooth transition of authority. The conservative complexion of the Constituent Assembly aside, the Republic would live to see another day. Not everyone, of course, was so sure; not everyone was so willing to acquiesce to the terms of a Pyrrhic victory. On April 26 the Republic, now “legal,” faced its first challenge. That day Rouen’s beleaguered workers congregated before the town *mairie* to hear the election results. The news was not good: Frederick Deschamps, a *commissaire de la République* and a chief organizer of the National Workshops, lost to Antoine Sénard, a moderate. Dismayed, the crowd grew restive. The National Guard mobilized without delay, closing in on the crowd and then dispersing it by force. Outmanned and unarmed, the *rouennais*, now in protest, withdrew to their neighborhoods where they began prying up paving stones. Deschamps’s defeat, as they saw it, signaled a clear repudiation of republican ideals. The Republic was in need of defense, they thought; and indeed, they justified their call to arms on these grounds.⁴⁶ With Sénard’s approval, the National Guard acted swiftly and ruthlessly; the insurrection was over by the 27th. Approximately 34 men died over the course of that brief day and a half; many more were wounded; many others were imprisoned. To the defeated the brutality of the repression had the distinct smell of old ways. “La rue Transnonain,” Blanqui fulminated, his rage sharpened by a corrosive retrieval of the past, “est surpassée.”⁴⁷

The uprising in Rouen confronted the Republic with a difficult question. Here, after all, were champions of the Republic turning arms against it. Here was “the people” insisting on divisions that only a week before had been relegated to earlier times: city and

⁴³ Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen*, p. 379.

⁴⁴ Proudhon, “Mystification du suffrage universel.”

⁴⁵ “Compact” is Walter Benjamin’s term. See note 24 to the second version of “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility,” in *Selected Writings Volume 3 (1935-1938)*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002), p. 129.

⁴⁶ Ronald Aminzade, “Between Movement and Party: The Transformation of Mid-Nineteenth-Century French Republicanism,” in *The Politics of Social Protest: Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements*, eds. J. Craig Jenkins and Bert Klandermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 24.

⁴⁷ Auguste Blanqui, “Les massacres de Rouen. La Société républicain centrale au gouvernement provisoire,” in *Maintenant, il faut des armes*, ed. Dominique Le Nuz (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2006), p. 143. Blanqui’s *affiche* was first published on May 2, 1848.

country, worker and bourgeois, labor and property, barricade and ballot box. By refusing to cooperate, Rouen's workers, "the real people," rebelled against "the imaginary people" (the terms are Marx's).⁴⁸ The cult of "the people," as it were, had begun to show signs of erosion. *Le Bulletin* responded with a curious refusal of its own:

Ne cherchons point, dans ces évènements, l'indice de scissions qui ne sauraient désormais exister parmi nous. N'oublions pas, citoyens, cette grande, cette évangélique devise: *Fraternité*, écrite sur nos glorieux drapeaux et au fronton de nos monuments publics; n'oublions pas que *fraternité* veut dire amour, charité, tolérance, conciliation, confiance, estime, indulgence réciproques.⁴⁹

Recognition of what happened in Rouen – that *le monde ouvrier* had asserted itself in noncompliance with the Republic – was, it seems, too risky of a business. Instead, the Republic reverted to its usual refrain, manifested here as a rhetorical to-and-fro between negative exhortations and symbolic affirmations, as if the one served as antidote to the other, or rather as anaesthetic. Once again, the Republic's unitary image of "the people" hinged on a loss of memory.

"À Paris, les rouges et les blancs, les prolétaires et les *conservateurs* se sont battus parce que la révolution n'avait pas aboli le prolétariat."⁵⁰ This is Théophile Thoré on June 24. By then, eastern Paris bristled with barricades, the city was under a state of siege, and the National Assembly had ceded executive authority to General Eugène Cavaignac. Both sides had already suffered heavy casualties, and an end to the uprising remained far from sight. Against all odds, the rebellion had gained ground; insurgents occupied key strategic points throughout the east – the Porte Saint-Denis, the Porte Saint-Martin, the Place de la Bastille, the Pantheon. The Hôtel de Ville, crown jewel of any insurrection, looked to be next. Frightened by the speed at which rebellion was spreading, the National Assembly called on the provinces for reinforcements. The countryside duly responded; thousands of National Guards, largely from the north, converged on the city over the next few days, each, in his own way, spoiling for a fight. The city was in a swarm. "C'était comme une atmosphère de guerre civile qui enveloppait tout Paris," Tocqueville observed, "et au milieu de laquelle, dans quelque lieu qu'on se retirât, il fallait vivre." "Il remplissait les quartiers où l'on ne se battait pas, comme ceux qui servaient de théâtre au combat, il avait pénétré dans nos maisons, autour, au-dessus, au-dessous de nous."⁵¹

Ground gained quickly became ground lost, and by the 25th only the faubourg Saint-Antoine remained in rebel hands. That afternoon Sénard, now president of the National Assembly, met with delegates from Saint-Antoine to negotiate an armistice. The rebels phrased their terms thus:

⁴⁸ Marx, *Class Struggles in France*, p. 54.

⁴⁹ *Le Bulletin de la République*, May 2, 1848.

⁵⁰ *La Vraie République*, June 24, 1848.

⁵¹ Tocqueville, pp. 190-191.

Nous ne désirons pas l'effusion du sang de nos frères; nous avons toujours combattu pour la République démocratique; si nous adhérons à ne pas poursuivre les progrès de la sanglante révolution qui s'opère, nous désirons aussi conserver le titre de citoyens en consacrant tous nos droits et nos devoirs de citoyens français.

Sénard cut to the chase:

Si vous voulez vraiment conserver le titre, les droits, et remplir les devoirs de citoyens français, détruisez à l'instant les barricades, en présence desquelles nous ne pourrions voir en vous que des insurgés; faites cesser toute résistance; soumettez-vous et rentrez en enfans égarés dans le sein de cette République que l'Assemblée nationale a mission de fonder, et que, par tous les moyens, elle saura faire respecter.⁵²

This was surrender, not reconciliation. The Republic, which attempted to make the schism of Rouen disappear by denying it, now adopted the logic of rupture as its own. There was, as Sénard made clear, no option of being both “citoyen” and “insurgé.” To choose the latter was to choose estrangement, banishment from the political.⁵³ Lamartine spoke even more directly to the point: to be an insurgent was to be “non de peuple.”⁵⁴ Leveling judgment on the legitimacy of the rebels' actions – of political violence as such – henceforth demanded that one take sides. “The people,” and the Republic with it, had “split all the way down to the ground.”⁵⁵

The insurrection crumbled the following day, after a final standoff at the intersection of rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the Place de la Bastille. Reprisals were summarily exacted, and merciless. The unluckiest on the rebel side faced the firing squad, others deportation to one of France's penal colonies. For the most part, trials were deemed unnecessary. Political clubs and radical newspapers – scorned, if tolerated offspring of the February Revolution – suffered a comparable fate. One by one, the spaces of appearance and action – the spaces of politics – were closed up. *Il faut en finir*. As soon as the smoke had begun to settle, Cavaignac issued a proclamation in which he made the terms of victory chillingly clear: “Dans Paris,” he declared, “je vois des vainqueurs, des vaincus; que mon nom reste maudit si je consentais à y voir des victimes.”⁵⁶

⁵² *Gazette des tribunaux*, June 26, 1848.

⁵³ See Eric Hazan, *L'invention de Paris: Il n'y a pas de pas perdus* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 2002), p. 381.

⁵⁴ Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, p. 442.

⁵⁵ Jonsson, p. 47.

⁵⁶ The proclamation, which Cavaignac addressed to both the National Guard and the army on June 26, was published in the *Gazette des tribunaux* on June 28, 1848. Thereafter, the proclamation was republished by nearly every newspaper in Paris.

In taking the rebels of the civil war as its subject, Meissonier's painting holds an exceptional place among pictures of the June barricades. In general, when painters and printmakers turned to the insurrection they tended, rather, either to eliminate the insurgent or, as is often the case, to reduce him to traces or effects – to National or Mobile Guards felled in combat, to houses devastated by gunfire, to billows of smoke wafting out of nearby windows and doors, to the barricade. Édouard de Beaumont and Eugène Cicéri's *Barricade de la rue Clovis* (fig. 28), a lithograph published in *Le Charivari* as part of an on-going series titled *Souvenirs des journées de juin*, and N.-E. Gabé's *Prise du Panthéon* (fig. 29) exemplify the typical response. In both, the rebel forces have been rendered emblematically – in a segment of street stripped of its pavement, a sandy hellmouth more than a grave, that consumes a fallen soldier, in a pock-marked, smoldering Pantheon – which, in turn, lends them a spectral quality, one whose shape-shifting translates into an eerily powerful vector of immanent destruction. Rebellion, it appears, is more like contagion than contestation. The infection having taken hold, it threatens to eat away at the city – at the foundations of society – from the inside out. Consequently, for those we do see – our heroes of “order” – fighting to eradicate the foreign contaminant seems not so much a declaration of civil war as a rescue effort.

Casting the June Days as such, while social in orientation, served an express political function. With the advent of universal suffrage, the barricade was widely believed to have lost its legitimacy as an means of collective action and came to symbolize instead a regressive form of unreasonable, criminal violence perpetrated by those who stood against civil society.⁵⁷ It promoted not only an anti-democratic political practice, but a senseless and, ultimately, sterile one; in a word, the barricade offered a lie in place of a remedy, the perversion of the principles of popular sovereignty rather than their re-entrenchment.⁵⁸ A famous lithograph from April (fig. 30), which shows an *homme du peuple* casting a ballot with his right hand as he pushes aside a rifle with his left, delivers the message with patent clarity: “Ça c'est pour l'ennemi du dehors,” the caption reads, “pour le dedans, voici comment l'on combat loyalement les adversaires.” The right to vote and the right to insurrection were irreconcilable.⁵⁹ According to this view, those who rose up in June were not so much motivated as “mised” (*égarés*) by the barricade and the social malaise it promised to alleviate. It is not for nothing that nearly every period account of the June Days describes the uprising as lacking coherence, principle, or *mot d'ordre*. The threat of genuine dissensus – that is, the threat that the Republic's own legitimacy might be at stake – had to be held at bay; *the Republic* and the “true people” it claimed to represent had to stand firmly – unambiguously, unequivocally – *in front* of the barricade.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ For a particularly vivid statement to this effect, see *La Réforme*, July 2, 1848 (morning edition). See also *Le National*, June 25, 1848.

⁵⁸ Charles Marchal, *Les barricades* (Paris, 1848), pp. 4-6.

⁵⁹ Louis Hincker, *Citoyens-combattants à Paris, 1848-1851* (Villeneuve d'Asq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2008), p. 22.

⁶⁰ See especially “Les barricades de l'ordre,” *Le Charivari*, June 28, 1848. See also the issue of June 27, in which *Le Charivari* expels the June insurgent from “le peuple.”

Admittedly, my description here is somewhat oversimplified. But the conclusion I wish to draw need not take matters further. What strikes me about these pictures is that the rebels are not merely faceless or otherwise rendered anonymous; nor are they subjected to the distortions of caricature and the simplifications of stereotype. They are, quite simply, nowhere to be seen. The June Days, these pictures insist, was a war waged against buildings and barricades – against “murs,” as Tocqueville put it.⁶¹ The strategy, though not unpredictable, is no less effective, for in leaving no room for the rebels in their image-history, these pictures reorient the fundamental dynamics of the civil war they purport to depict.⁶² Indeed, by dis-figuring rebellion, by recasting it as sense-less violence – incoherent, audible only as noise, as crackling wood and exploding shells and death rattles – they rob the rebel’s resistance of articulacy, of the expressiveness and meaningfulness essential to dissident action, in short, of political existence. Rebellion, here, has no place in the communal spaces of the public realm; rebels do not belong to them; they are to be hated. Unsurprisingly, then, do pictures like these steer clear of the *quartier*. Seeing, for them, stops at the Panthéon, the Église Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, the Porte Saint-Denis, the Bastille; it terminates at the barricade. Of the hundred or so pictures of June street-fighting stored in the de Vinck Collection at the Cabinet des Estampes, only a select few stray from this regularized practice of exclusion; the same holds true for painting.

My point is not that Meissonier’s contrary act of recognition brings the rebel more clearly into view. If Meissonier’s painting is exceptional for representing the June insurgent, it is even more so for way he does it. Dolf Oehler has noted that, for Meissonier, facing these “victimes” – looking *behind* the barricade – was possible only after they had been “chosifiées par la mort.”⁶³ As a way of understanding Meissonier’s social relation to these rebels and the limitations it imposed, the conclusion is incisive. Still, in overlooking the painting itself, it underestimates the complementary role of picturing – of Meissonier’s way of handling and describing his subject, which subtends his procedures of recognition – in mediating his encounter with the June rebel. Meissonier’s barricade, I am suggesting, operates as a point of division – as a point of limitation – in more ways than one. Enclosing all fourteen of the painting’s corpses within a set of confines delimited by the curbsides at left and right and the overrun bulwark at front and back – the bulwark, that is, as both the rubble of paving stones in the foreground and the space now left vacant by their removal in the middle-ground – it acts, in addition, as a framing device, fixing within its boundaries a heap of corpses whose bodies have been reduced to inert matter. If facing these men for Meissonier was possible only after their defeat, it seems he could get to know them well enough to compose his painting only after they had been set off – objectified – by a pictorial structure he knew intimately.

⁶¹ Tocqueville, p. 212.

⁶² See Emmanuel Fureix, “Mots de guerre civile. Juin 1848 à l’épreuve de la représentation,” *Revue d’histoire du XIXe siècle (1848, nouveaux regards)* 15 (1997): esp. pp. 23-26.

⁶³ Dolf Oehler, *Le spleen contre l’oublié, juin 1848: Baudelaire, Flaubert, Heine, Herzen* (Paris: Payot, 1996), p. 136.

Meissonier first recorded his impressions of June in a watercolor rapidly put down in the summer of 1848 (fig. 31). He then translated his initial assessment into a finely tuned oil painting between the fall of 1848 and the summer of 1849. He had every intention of exhibiting the canvas at that year's Salon. But as the opening of the exhibition neared, Meissonier decided to withdraw his submission, just before the official catalogue went to press. The reasons for this early withdrawal are not known for certain, but it has been suggested that one of two factors likely informed his decision: either the picture, in his eyes, was not quite finished – Meissonier was a notoriously fastidious painter – or the memory of the event it represented was still too fresh for the Salon public to bear witness to yet again.⁶⁴ To put it another way, the intimacy of its miniaturized image, Meissonier's refusal to make the details of carnage atrocious, would have sabotaged the mechanisms of forgetting, of “refoulement.”⁶⁵ So Meissonier removed the painting from that Salon's offerings and replaced it with an anodyne *fumeur*. Over the course of the next year, Meissonier's concerns must have subsided, for he resubmitted the painting in 1850, along with four others, all of which spoke directly to his customary style and to his customary audience: a lute player, a Sunday gathering set in the 18th century, a painter showing some drawings to a connoisseur, and a portrait, all of them on the same miniature scale, all of them ready to adorn the walls of Paris's well-to-do. By the time Meissonier sent the painting to the Palais-National, he had also changed its title, from *Juin*, a designation provocative and poignant in its plainness and simplicity, to a more benign sounding *Souvenir de guerre civile*. On the whole, Salon critics were pleased with what Meissonier's painting had to say, even if, as many would remark, it confronted them with painful truths they wished to forget, even if, that is, it forced them to look closely at things they would rather not.

An artillery captain of the National Guard unit that overtook this particular barricade, Meissonier not only witnessed, but had a hand in creating the scene he would then record. For Meissonier, his participation was anything but heroic, even if impelled by a felt sense of necessity. Indeed, he found the experience profoundly traumatic, as much an act of collusion as of dutiful service to the cause of order. “Folie du peuple et folie de la bourgeoisie.”⁶⁶ Here is Meissonier himself describing the incident in a letter to the Belgian painter Alfred Stevens:

J'étais alors capitaine d'artillerie dans la garde nationale; depuis trois jours nous nous battons, j'avais eu des hommes tués et blessés dans ma batterie, l'insurrection entourait l'hôtel de ville où nous étions, et quand cette barricade de la rue de la Mortellerie venait d'être prise je

⁶⁴ Constance Cain Hungerford, “Meissonier's *Souvenir de guerre civile*,” *The Art Bulletin* vol. 6, no. 2 (June 1979): pp. 282-283; James Kearns, *Théophile Gautier, Orator to the Artists: Art Journalism of the Second Republic* (London: Maney Publishing, 2007), p. 106.

⁶⁵ On the notion of “refoulement” and its determinations, see Oehler, pp. 119-128.

⁶⁶ Charles Baudelaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), p. 1200.

l'ai vue dans toute son horreur, les défenseurs tués, fusillés, jetés par les fenêtres, couvrant le sol de leurs cadavres, la terre n'ayant pas encore bu tout le sang. C'est là que j'ai entendu ce mot terrible qui mieux que tout, dit à quel point, dans ces épouvantables guerres des rues, les esprits sont hors d'eux-mêmes. 'Tous ces hommes étaient-ils coupables?' demandait Marast [*sic*] à un officier de la garde républicaine. 'Monsieur Le Maire, soyez en bien sûr, il n'y eu pas le quart d'innocents.'⁶⁷

Curiously, Meissonier locates the battle in the rue de la Mortellerie, named as such for the mortar masons who piled into the squalid tenements that lined its north side. In 1835, however, the street's residents petitioned to have its name changed to rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville. The first syllable of Mortellerie – *mort* – simply proved too dreary a reminder of the street's recent history: popular belief had it that the street, overcrowded and severely depressed, was a hothouse for the spread of cholera in 1832.⁶⁸ Constance Hungerford has suggested that Meissonier, in conjuring the street's former moniker, sought to equate cholera and civil war, both of them scourges that bring death to guilty and blameless alike.⁶⁹ Be this as it may, the reference also has the effect of drawing its reader and its writer into the complex temporality of recollection, whose details – purposeful, deliberate – speak of memory's consolidation into an image that can then be recounted from a distance; Meissonier, in the way he relates his experience, seems to be searching for an authorial voice somewhere between testimony and history. Written in the fall of 1890, a few months before Meissonier's own death, the letter is, after all, a retrospective look back on the event and the image to which it gave rise.

That the trauma Meissonier described in 1890 inflected the making of his picture 40 years earlier nevertheless seems beyond reasonable doubt. He alludes to it himself: "Quand [j'ai] fait [l'aquarelle]," these are the lines that come just before the account quoted above, "j'étais encore sous la terrible impression du spectacle que je venais de voir, et croyez le, mon cher Alfred, ces choses là vous entrent dans l'âme, quand on les reproduit, ce n'est pas seulement pour faire une *œuvre* c'est qu'on a été ému jusqu'au fond des entrailles et qu'il faut que ce *souvenir* reste" (my emphasis). If we take Meissonier at his word, and I see no reason why we should not, the act of picturing the event he witnessed was an exercise in cathexis; by fixing the experience, he could then, or so he thought, contain it. The *œuvre* only comes later in this account, as a byproduct of the initial procedure.

Executed shortly after the event itself, the watercolor could have done this kind of psychological work for Meissonier. His horror is everywhere inscribed in the picture he produced – in the foreground figure whose head is turned such that it looks to be missing, whose right arm appears severed at the elbow, and whose foot, now shoeless, has the

⁶⁷ Meissonier's letter, which was published by Paul Robert in *Le Matin* on April 29, 1891, is now in the Louvre.

⁶⁸ Eric Hazan, "Paris romantique: les pauvres et leurs quartiers," in *Paris sous tension* (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2011), p. 79.

⁶⁹ Constance Cain Hungerford, *Ernest Meissonier: Master in his Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 52.

rounded edges of an undifferentiated stump, or in the figure at center whose eyes and mouth, still agape, speak of that agonizing moment as death finally prevails, but also in the forced certainty of the drawing and in the way it struggles, despite its evident proficiency, to give clear definition to the forms it delineates. Such an embattled manner of drawing is exceptional in Meissonier's *œuvre*; in general, his control borders on the authoritarian. Or look at how the mixtures of red, blue and white with which Meissonier fills out the watercolor seem not to inhere as integral parts of the objects they describe, but are instead applied flatly on top of the drawing, paying little heed to the contours meant to confine them or, for that matter, to the difference between hand and smock, as if the role of color in the picture were not description at all, but to give the image a redeemable meaning it otherwise would not have had. Done in crayon, the coloring appears at once pasty, thick and, somehow, washed out – it is a ghastly tricolor indeed! It is as if Meissonier were both repelled and captivated by the scene and, now, the object taking shape in front of him. Delacroix, whose enthusiasm for the watercolor prompted Meissonier to give it to him in 1849, was surely right when he remarked of the watercolor that it lacks the “*je ne sais quoi qui fait un objet d'art d'un objet odieux.*”⁷⁰ Art, in this instance, remained a secondary concern for Meissonier. It was the odious that mattered most, that had to hold.

None of this is to suggest, of course, that in the watercolor Meissonier eluded the social and art-historical determinants that mediate how artists see and depict the world they experience. Terms like innocence and authenticity, the catchwords of mid-century Realism, have little purchase here. Anger, misunderstanding, and fear – the instinctive responses of his class to the episode – inflect the watercolor as much as trauma, and the qualities I mentioned a moment ago might just as easily be described as violent, even cruel. If Meissonier's reference to the rue de la Mortellerie generalizes civil war by likening it to a rapacious disease, it also reeks of his own class attitude. Meissonier, it is true, embraced the principles of republicanism. He was an avid reader of *Le National* and even ran, if unsuccessfully, for a seat on the municipal council of Poissy in July 1848. But his Republic – what he envisioned as its ideal organization – assumed the paradoxical form of authoritarian democracy; it turned on bonds of respect derived from an asymmetrical relationship between independent and enlightened government, the State, and loyal service to it. “Devoir” came before “droit” in his mind, the one subservient to the other. The part, so to speak, needed to fit itself or else be fitted to the whole.⁷¹ For Meissonier, painting and politics were analogous practices. If I have emphasized the dividedness of traumatic experience, then, I have done so because it points up the crucial difference between the watercolor and the oil. As Meissonier translated one into the other, his focus seems to have been inverted; and the *souvenir*, in the final product, solidified into a kind of trope, an effect of picturing rather than vice versa.

⁷⁰ Delacroix, *Journal 1822-1863*, ed. A. Joubin (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1996), p. 182. Delacroix held on to the watercolor until his death. At the posthumous sale of his *atelier* in late February 1864, Meissonier's brother-in-law, Louis Steinheil, purchased it for 3000 francs, after which he presented to the Louvre, but Frédéric Reiset, *conservateur des peintures, des dessin et de la chalcographie*, refused to buy it. Steinheil then sold it to Arthur Stevens, Alfred's brother, for 6000 francs. The watercolor remained in private hands until the musée d'Orsay acquired it in 1997.

⁷¹ M. O. Gréard, *Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier: ses souvenirs, ses entretiens* (Paris: Hachette, 1897), pp. 125-127; 202.

Much of what gives the watercolor its sense of immediacy is the seeming disorderliness or spontaneity of the way Meissonier arranges his vanquished insurgents, an effect heightened by the stretches of empty space between and around the bodies in front and those in back. This is indeed how such bodies would likely fall in battle, on top of one another, but also apart from one another. These passages of empty space – empty of bodies, but also, in large part, of mark-making – lend the watercolor its forlorn air of desolation. In the oil, Meissonier eliminated most of that empty space, filling out the right side with three extra bodies and the left foreground with sharply defined paving stones. He then sequestered the painting's corpses by introducing the quarried hollow behind them. Moreover, Meissonier added the elegant, if banal, lamp fixture, which juts peculiarly from the building at left – it should be slightly angled if it is to conform to the picture's perspective – and in its delicacy serves as a telling antithesis to the indecent collection of corpses beneath it. As the gaslamp shifts the picture's perspective from an oblique angle to a frontal vantage, it would seem to suggest – in all of its claims to modernity – that the forward march of history will right this scene in one way or another; rather than activate the image, however, rather than break its grim arrest, the iron fixture, a few black lines set against the dreary approximation of the built environment, merely reinforces the sense of futility that saturates the picture as a whole. History, here, comes to a standstill; it appears as a matter of fact, as dismal permanence. In filling out the surface of the oil with additional, often incidental detail, Meissonier, on the one hand, heightens the contrast between the painting's upper and lower halves, the one a liquid, loose mixture of browns, blacks and grays designating the funneled perspective of the street and the apartment blocks that line it, the other a porcelaneous combination of reds, blues, and whites – of smocks and flesh and clotting blood – that gives a fired solidity to the accretions of bodies and paving stones. On the other hand, and as a corollary of the first, Meissonier produces a foreground that is more compact and unmoving.

Between watercolor and oil, Meissonier executed at least ten preparatory drawings, of both individual bodies and the cityscape (figs. 32-34). Working from a preliminary, fully resolved watercolor to oil was something unprecedented for him, and so he returned to the model and the life study before building them back up into another picture; death, we might say, would be made to conform to the artist's pose, to share its sharpness and focus, its coherence. Through the procedures of preparatory drawing, Meissonier worked out not only the dispositions of individual corpses – set at this angle to the picture surface, with so much foreshortening, with this orientation to right and left, top and bottom – but also the undulations and folds of smocks and pants, ensuring they appear to correspond to the bend of a knee and the languid twist of a body that has just collapsed under his own dead weight. Each study is distinct, a single body – first nude, then, on a separate sheet, clothed – hovering within an empty, groundless space. What mattered, at this stage, was not the relation of one body to the next, nor the interaction between the body and the created environment of the city, but the isolated occurrence of death, particular only in its experience and the shape of its final appearance. There are no *pavés* in the drawings; the street, like the barricade, is absent. But the city undergoes similar treatment, a similar process of concretion: doors and windows confirmed to be here, so tall, and so wide, cornices locked down in their mismatched heterogeneity yet unable, all the same, truly to interrupt the drab monotony of the tenement bloc, the slow rise of the street and the height of the curb given their proper measure. He does not

repeat this drawing; instead, he divides it internally, bringing the distant view closer to the surface – it sits below rather than side-by-side with its counterpart – as if to correct human vision, to overcome its restrictedness, to make it total. Fragmentation, here, is pitted against its constitutively disruptive potential; it is drawn into the service of mastery, of a totalizing perception. Meissonier’s commitment to drawing from life, whatever the circumstances, was legendary, and this work would prove no exception. Perhaps we should not be surprised, then, that Meissonier’s work from the model led him, in the oil, to return to the figure in the foreground the corporeal integrity absent in the watercolor. What once conveyed an air of urgency and indecision, spoke of lived experience and contingency, ends up reading, rather, like a compulsive need to put things just so. In a final gesture, Meissonier removed the date – 1848 – from beside his signature.

Yet the most conspicuous difference between the watercolor and the oil is, of course, in the handling. Gone in large part is the tension so palpable in the watercolor, the incompatible mixture of tremulousness and concentration that activates its image, disempowers the constraints of form, and, in turn, gives the picture a transfixing poignancy. What we get instead is firm and scrupulous painting of the kind typical of Meissonier’s manner. Bodies, smocks, the lamp fixture, paving stones, a doleful cap on the curbside, all are painted with the same even-handedness, with the same exertion of energy and attention. Such handling, however, has left everything somewhat flat – leveled – the consequence of which is that all objects in the painting come to possess the same basic signifying power. What matters is the collective effect, one in which every detail points in the same general direction. The result is not only a painting that exceeds the period’s expectations for finish, but also an image that seems colder, airless, and all the more horrifying and callous because of it: “le fini impitoyable,” Gautier dubbed it.⁷² The indiscriminating care with which Meissonier crafted his image has led Hungerford to call the work an “unsettling dehumanization of the tragedy.”⁷³ Indeed, yet the handling, which Salon critics unflinchingly compared to the cold indifference of the daguerreotype, produces this effect not simply because these men are equated with the things of this pictured world and therefore deprived of “visual, and hence psychological, uniqueness,” but because, and in so doing, it leaves the viewer searching, in the words of T. J. Clark, for a “clear point of vantage.”⁷⁴ Exacting craftsmanship need not always lead on to a clear articulation of meaning. Degradation is often more than simply a matter of making the human base.

Over the years, Meissonier’s painting has rightly been called jewel-like. His forms and color have the hard, crisp precision of enamel work, which is complemented by the slight build up of pigment in the areas where fabric folds and blood pools and by the painting’s highly polished surface. Sure, Meissonier lets this quality of painting go as the street funnels back into its farthest reaches. The painting there is surprisingly non-descript, a blur of brown and gray and black, and appears even more so as the sharply delineated edges of the lamp fixture emerge from this expanse of viscous streaks. This is the Meissonier from the watercolor, where the fragility of painting is set against his usually fastidious habits. In the oil, the background flattens out into a pictorial cul-de-sac, pushing the image, which grows increasingly stiff and lifeless, forward until it sits

⁷² Gautier, “Salon de 1850-1851.”

⁷³ Hungerford, *Ernest Meissonier*, p. 54.

⁷⁴ Clark, p. 28.

squarely in the foreground, in the area between the paving stones and the site whence they were dug up. A remnant of the watercolor, the looseness of the background hints at a kind of sublimation, that something lies beneath the surface, and renders the jewel-like foreground all the more perverse. Picked out with a crystalline clarity the meticulously crafted detail of Meissonier's painting is at odds with its subject, and as a consequence both the picture and its detail take on a disquieting aspect, a dreadful banality. Even the gore of massacre can be *éclatant*.

Of Meissonier's details, perhaps the most jewel-like is the man whose body lies closest to the painting's surface, face up, his legs splayed by the rubble beneath him. This is the man who underwent anatomical reconstruction between watercolor and oil: his head has been put back in place, his arm reattached (though a bloodied paving stone at his forearm recalls his former state of disrepair), his foot returned to full, if soiled definition. Though restored to bodily completeness, this man has evolved, nonetheless, into an even more frightful image, all signs of his physiognomy having hardened into an indistinct blankness that this death, as Meissonier understands it, effects; the impression is there in the nameless shops as well. The tension in this insurgent's hand, still clutching for the rifle it once held but of which it has since been despoiled, now seems to evidence only the onset of *rigor mortis*. The passage from life to death, Meissonier intimates, is similarly a hardening of vital flesh into mute stone. A rebel's corpse and a paving stone really are not so different in the end. More unsettling still, however, is that Meissonier, in effacing the indications of this man's identity, does not defer to the reductive tactics often employed by those of his class to characterize men like this: no obvious name-calling, no bestializations, no stereotyping. Meissonier seems to be in search of some other way to understand this man and, by extension, his compatriots.

And so Meissonier dressed this rebel in a blue smock and red pants, and inserted between them the white flesh of his sinewy breast, his torso laid bare by the force of his backward fall over the barricade. Clothed in this way, this man assumes the coloristic qualities and symbolism of the tricolor flag, now overrun, now stiff with sweat, dirt, and dried blood. He is, to be sure, a far cry from Delacroix's Liberty, who holds the banner of the French State high, her breast similarly exposed, as she leads the revolution – woman and child, worker and bourgeois alike – over the barricade and into a future of her own making. For Delacroix's verticality insert Meissonier's horizontality – a “horizontalité cadavérique,” according to Gautier – and foreshortening, both of which, together, collapse the body and turn it in on itself. Gravity in the Meissonier is merciless, each man pressured to take the shape of what lies beneath him. The symbolic content of the tricolor is more than Meissonier's insurgent can bear. He is a symbol of what falls apart in revolution rather than what comes together to build a new future – a symbol of obliteration, of what goes blank. Simply put, clothed in the tricolor this man is at once the most meaningful and the most meaningless in the entire painting. Presence and absence here coincide.

The conditions of struggle changed at the end of June. “The street fight with barricades,” Engels noted in retrospect, “which up to 1848 gave everywhere the final

decision,” had become “to a considerable extent obsolete.”⁷⁵ The qualitative devaluation of the barricade – what Engels called “rebellion in the old style” – had little to do with actual tactics; few, to be sure, ever considered the barricade capable of standing up to the material resources of the army, to the *cannonade* and the *mitrailleuse*. One did not build a barricade to outstrip the enemy. The determinants of victory and defeat hinged, rather, on whether the barricade proved *compelling*. Insurrections succeeded when the soldier saw “the people” on the other side, when, hearing “honest, courageous words,” he yielded to a “fraternal appeal,” to “the voice of the people’s conscience” – in short, when he refused to act.⁷⁶ That is to say, the true potency of the barricade – what it failed to exercise in June – resided in the “moral effect” it produced, in its ability to influence the soldier, to shake his steadfastness, by bringing him into contact with the insurgent. No longer, however, did the soldier approach the barricade straight on. Instead, he blasted his way through houses, went around through yards and gardens; he kept his distance, remained *dans l’obscurité*. Seen obliquely, the barricade, this dividing wall that once figured so powerfully as a medium of communion, now presented him only with a monstrous mien. *C’est le drapeau de la France! Osez-vous tirer sur vos frères?* The plea struck insensitive ears in June. The old shibboleths had ceased to hold sway; or rather, they had ceased to apply. In the eyes of the soldier, only a hostile *populace* fought on the other side of the June barricades, a warring nation of “agitators, plunderers, levelers, the scum of society.” No more did it comprise *citoyens*; no more did it resemble “the people.” “The spell of the barricade was broken.”⁷⁷

The decisive point, as I see it, is this: at root, the reorientation of June 1848 was perceptual. The civil war had as it were stripped the Revolution of its veneer, leaving the social reality on which it turned stark-naked. “Some were stunned because their illusions were vanishing in a cloud of gunsmoke,” Marx observed; “others because they could not understand how the people could dare to come forward *independently* on behalf of its *very own* interests.”⁷⁸ Listen, for instance, to the following exchange between General Bedeau and an unnamed *chef de l’insurrection*. The conversation, which bears the distinctive marks of a “struggle for recognition,” stalls on the question of “the people,” its representation, and thus the essential nature of its sovereignty:

‘Général,’ lui dit en l’abordant d’un air hautain, le chef de la députation, qui portait les épaulettes de capitaine de la garde nationale, et qui, depuis le matin, commandait l’insurrection dans la Cité, ‘je viens vous sommer d’obéir au peuple et à la garde nationale de Paris. Le peuple veut la reddition de l’hôtel de ville et la dissolution de l’Assemblée; ce qu’il veut, il l’obtiendra de gré ou de force. L’armée ne tardera pas à se joindre à lui. Déjà, vous le voyez, la garde républicaine que vous avez envoyée contre nous a passé derrière nos barricades, le peuple...’ –

⁷⁵ Engels, Introduction, p. 21.

⁷⁶ The phrases are Trotsky’s. Cited in Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1879-1921* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 138.

⁷⁷ Engels, Introduction, p. 23.

⁷⁸ Marx, “The June Revolution,” p. 132.

‘Monsieur,’ interrompt le général avec indignation, ‘je ne reconnais d’autre peuple que celui qui a nommé l’Assemblée constituante. Quant à l’armée, elle est fidèle à son devoir et le prouvera tout à l’heure en balayant vos barricades!’⁷⁹

Or this one, rather different in tone, between François Arago, president of the Executive Commission, and rebels, again unnamed, in the rue Soufflot:

‘Pourquoi vous insurgez-vous contre la loi?’ – ‘On nous a déjà tant promis,’ répondent les ouvriers, ‘et l’on nous a si mal tenu parole que nous ne nous payons plus de mots; ils nous faut des actes!’ – ‘Mais pourquoi faire des barricades?’ – ‘Nous en élevions ensemble en 1832,’ répondent les émeutiers, ‘vous ne vous souvenez donc plus du cloître Saint-Merry?’ – ‘Mais, Monsieur Arago,’ crie une voix, ‘pourquoi nous faire des reproches, vous n’avez jamais eu faim, vous ne savez pas ce que c’est la misère!’⁸⁰

The second dialogue, like the first, centers on questions of identity and mediation, the rights of “the people” and the determinations of the law. “À bas l’Assemblée,” cries the insurgent people of the Cité. “The true people voted,” Bedeau replies. The rue Soufflot implores Arago, who, in ‘32, remonstrated against the forcible repression of men fighting to win their freedom, to recall the convictions they hold in common: “Have you forgotten the cloître Saint-Merry?”⁸¹ Arago remains silent. “Mere words and broken promises, *your law*,” say the rebels; “we no longer hope for anything from it. As in ‘32, we declare ourselves *outside* the law; we act *against* the violence to which it yet again subjects us.” “You know nothing of real destitution,” a final voice interjects. To put the declension another way: the starkness of the first exchange, its flat declaration of disassociation sodden with the pessimism of feigned politeness – “Monsieur...” – becomes the pathos of the second, its sense of disillusion captured in a futile appeal to togetherness, the timbre of which turns tragic as the closing line acknowledges the restrictedness – the true limits – of former alliances. In both cases, the substance of politics pivots on the degree and intensity of association, its authenticity or actuality; in both, the response comes back in the negative, with a final declaration of non-identity. “You are not the people.” “You are not one of us.” Confident that *la loi*, even in its reformed state, is the only just mediation, Arago cannot recognize his contradiction; he asks the wrong question. Bedeau, accepting the “immeasurable chasm” that separates him from the man he confronts, asks none at all; instead, he simply revokes, casting the rebel among the

⁷⁹ Stern, *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1862), p. 401.

⁸⁰ Schmidt, p. 53; see also, Stern, p. 384. Nearly every major newspaper I consulted reported some version of this encounter.

⁸¹ On Arago’s petition, in the presentation of which he was joined by Jacques Laffitte and Odilon Barrot, see Thomas Bouchet, *Le Roi et les barricades: une histoire des 5 et 6 juin 1832* (Paris: Éditions Seli Arslan, 2000), p. 37.

déclassés, the “scum” – in short, the unproductive, non-revolutionary types Marx calls “the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass.”⁸²

Historical events had obliged the bourgeois, as it were, to reassess the implicit representation that oriented his self-understanding. And so he tightened his grip, adhered to a different vision of the world: the “humanisme optimiste des Lumières,” so affecting in February, had crystallized under the influence of civil war into “la pessimisme et la misanthropie” of a class. “L’homme d’après 1848 serait devenu,” as Oehler notes, “un homme de la haine.”⁸³ In a celebrated passage from *L’Idiot de la famille* (Oehler’s point of departure), Sartre likens the “métamorphose” to an awakening, a coming into self-awareness and the guilt that inevitably follows, a great Fall – banishment, so to speak, from the paradise of bourgeois innocence. The bourgeois admitted his hatred in June, Sartre says, accepted guilt, but only on the condition that its origin in the historical relations between men – its true character, which is to say its exploitative character – be suppressed, that it be made, instead, a general determination, at once an explanation and a forgetting. “En juin 1848,” he goes on to explain, “les voiles se déchirèrent, la bourgeoisie s’atteignit par un crime dans sa réalité de classe, elle perdit son universalité pour se définir, dans une société divisée, par des rapports de force avec les autres classes.”⁸⁴ To clarify: what the bourgeoisie wished to forget was not the battle itself, but the self-fulfillment it subsequently achieved by means of criminal violence, as the result of mass murder. The distinction is crucial: the bourgeoisie fully realized its “will to power” after it had already won – that is, in the resentment it expressed in the senseless slaughter of the vanquished, men who, *en blouse*, bore the mark of Cain. “Ils étaient déjà morts,” Louis Ménard observed in disgust, “mais on les frappait toujours.”⁸⁵

The most notorious of the massacres occurred on the night of the 26th, when National Guards marched hundreds of rebels then incarcerated in the *caveaux* of the Tuileries to the place du Carrousel, knelt, and fired. “Mes amis,” they had assured their captives, “on va vous donner de l’air.”⁸⁶ No one was fooled. At least 50 men died on the Carrousel that night, including a handful of National Guards who wandered across the line of fire. Ghastly in their own right, these numbers were nonetheless relative: kindred incidents would take place throughout Paris – in the *caveaux* themselves, where urine supplemented meagre rations of bread and water, in the *caves* of the École Militaire and on the *pelouse* of the Champs de Mars, in the Luxembourg gardens and the cemetery of Montparnasse and the gypsum quarries of Montmartre, on the pont d’Arcole and against the Barrière de Ménilmontant, in the homes and alleyways of the eastern *quartiers*. The violence exercised over the next several days, during what Léonard Gallois called “l’épilogue du grand drame de Juin,” was of a novel order.⁸⁷ Murder, to be sure, had long since been a convenient instrument of consolidating powers, but never had it been committed with such profound pessimism, such blatant self-disregard. The bourgeoisie was forsaking the connections it once claimed to certain eternal characteristics of human nature. “The Assembly cries ‘woe’ over the workers,” Marx wrote on the 29th, “in order

⁸² Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1987), p. 75.

⁸³ Oehler, p. 85.

⁸⁴ Sartre, *L’Idiot de la famille: Gustave Flaubert de 1821 à 1857*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), p. 398.

⁸⁵ Ménard, *Prologue d’une révolution, février-juin 1848* (Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2007), p. 260.

⁸⁶ Ménard, p. 259.

⁸⁷ Gallois, *Histoire de la révolution de 1848*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1851), p. 203.

to conceal that the ‘vanquished’ is none other than itself. Either it or the republic must now disappear. Hence its frantic howls of ‘long live the republic.’”⁸⁸ The din of gunfire was drowned out; “no one dared to speak on behalf of the people.” An accurate body-count, of course, does not exist. Once the smoke from the fusillades had dissipated, the slain were collected or tossed in the Seine, “le champ du sang” effaced by layers of fresh sand.⁸⁹

Fraternité, the great watchword of February, here found its “true, genuine, prosaic expression,” civil war, as Marx says, in its “most terrible form.”⁹⁰ On the 28th, Proudhon recorded his dismay at the nature of the violence in a deadpan that complements the tragic tonality of Marx’s inflections:

Ce matin, 28 juin, on fusille à la Conciergerie, à l’Hôtel-de-Ville, 48 heures après la Victoire.
 On fusille les prisonniers blessés, désarmés.
 On répand les calomnies les plus atroces sur les insurgés, afin d’exciter contre eux la vengeance.
 On va arrêter à domicile les citoyens suspects de communisme. On choisit surtout les combattants de février; on les conduit au pont d’Arcole et là, on les fusille et on les jette à l’eau.
 On a enivré les gardes mobiles et on les a déchaînés comme des bouledogues sur les insurgés, frères contre frères, une nouvelle Thébaidé...
 Horreur!...Horreur!...
 On ramenait les prisonniers du Faubourg à la recommandation des officiers de la ligne qui recommandaient la clémence, mais, arrivés à l’Hôtel de Ville, on les fusillait et on les jetait à l’eau.⁹¹

We might not expect such restraint from Proudhon, even in his *carnets*. It would seem as though, for him, reticence and expressiveness had for the moment become correlatives, as though genuine horror – the kind that defies speech, that draws little consolation from exclamation points – could only be captured in monotone. To be clear, I wish neither to dismiss nor devalue the heightened pitch of his interjection (“Horreur!... Horreur!”): the interruption has its own eloquence. Amid the matter-of-fact detailing of the passages before and after it, however, it seems to me to hit a slightly false note. What I take to be the poignancy of Proudhon’s account, the affect of its prose, lies in the dryness of its handling, in the sense of bathos its restraint makes palpable, in the repetition of the indefinite subject “on” and the way it seems to reinforce the plainness of Proudhon’s language even as the implicitness of the pronoun – its caution – risks passivity. Not that the lack of a concrete referent dulls any edges, confuses the orientation of the crime: indeed, amid a description of pervasive, on-going terror the non-specificity of “on” takes

⁸⁸ Marx, “The June Revolution,” p. 133.

⁸⁹ Pardigon, p. 205.

⁹⁰ Marx, “The June Revolution,” p. 130.

⁹¹ Proudhon, *Carnets de P.-J. Proudhon*, vol. 3 (1848-1850) (Paris: M. Rivière, 1968), p. 67.

on a singular potency; it reproduces the unexceptional character of the tragedy, the true pessimism and misanthropy of the deed. These Mobile Guards, men who typically shared the class identity of those they led to the slaughter, had been demonstrating a monstrous blindness to the machinations of class power – of this Proudhon was sure. Brothers were truly killing brothers, in other words; and they did so ferociously, swept up in a fog of *ressentiment* their masters proved too eager to nurture. Blanqui concurred: “La fraternité aujourd’hui! une hypocrisie, un piège, un poignard! La fraternité de Caïn! – L’Inquisition disait: mon frère! à sa victime sur le chevalet. Ce mot: la fraternité, sera bientôt un sarcasme comme cette autre parole: pour l’amour de Dieu! devise de charité divine, devenue l’ironie suprême de l’égoïsme et de l’insensibilité.”⁹² As did Joseph Déjacque, who sharpened the retort, gave it an explosive concision: “La fraternité, c’est la fratricide.” “Oui,” his *chanson de juin* concludes,

La fraternité n’est qu’une duperie
 Quand la misère et l’or sont ensemble accouplés.
 Depuis quand ouvre-t’on au loup la bergerie?
 Bientôt, pauvres moutons, vous seriez étranglés!
 Ah! tant que dans nos lois l’égalité rigide
 N’aura pas incarné la solidarité.
 Les flancs de la fraternité
 Enfauteront le fratricide!⁹³

Dangerous words, these: Déjacque, like Blanqui, spent most of the Second Republic in lockup or in exile – he fought with the rebels in June, backed Ledru-Rollin’s abortive *coup d’état* on June 13, 1849, excited contempt for the government and hatred between citizens with a small collection of poems titled *Les Lazaréennes* (1851).

The catastrophe of the final act, in short, exposed the myth of formal democracy – the impossibility of its translation into social unity – by bearing out the violence of its central contradiction. On this point Blanqui was as insistent as Déjacque: “C’est une pauvre garantie pour le faible que la conscience du fort. Protection, oppression.”⁹⁴ Only after the “égalité tutélaire” of Nature has been realized, he goes on to say, only after the “équilibre entre les forces des individus,” Nature’s sole means of preserving “l’espèce,” has been restored, might *fraternité* be delivered from its opposite: “la fraternité, c’est l’impossibilité de tuer son frère.” Here, we might say, *fraternité* appears in its prelapsarian state, before the fall into self-reflexivity – a corruption of “conscience” epitomized by “égoïsme” and “insensibilité” and expressed in the division of irony – turned brothers into enemies, *semblables* into masters and slaves, before, that is, it universalized the “*struggle for life*.” The implicit animality that unites us, as it were, asserts itself territorially, imperiously: “il y a chez l’homme une tendance native, une force d’expansion et d’envahissement qui le pousse à s’étendre, à se développer aux

⁹² Blanqui, *Critique sociale*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1885), p. 96.

⁹³ Déjacque’s *chanson*, “La fraternité, c’est le fratricide,” was published in Sebastian Seiler, *Das Complot vom 13. Juni 1849 oder der letzte Sieg der Bourgeoisie in Frankreich. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Gegenwart* (Hamburg, 1850), p. 96.

⁹⁴ Blanqui, *Critique sociale*, p. 96.

dépens de tout ce qui n'est pas lui."⁹⁵ It is a tragic reality: *Homo homini lupus*. Yet, impelled by the "soif universelle d'usurpation," a "condition indispensable à la conservation et au perfectionnement," this bitter struggle occurs at a standstill, the colonizing instinct of one counterbalancing the identical instinct of another; no advancement is to be gained from its implacable to-and-fro. Each of its iterations, rather, proves just another transfiguration of the same cancerous "need," one more restaging of a single catastrophe, which the doctrine of progress conceals with the jargon of historical necessity. "L'homme est un loup pour l'homme," Blanqui repeats, "mais un loup sous la peau d'un agneau, afin de mieux atteindre sa proie."⁹⁶ Humanity, here, "figures as condemned";⁹⁷ for progress, envisioned as immanent development, begets forms that are new only in appearance. Rooted in the system they seek to transcend, these "new" forms are as incapable of furnishing liberating solutions, of renewing society by raising it to a higher ground, as the "sentiment de justice" is of sublimating man's primitive appetite for things. "Le pouvoir est oppresseur par nature."⁹⁸ The same irremediable fallacy, as it were, drives the liberal's march toward equality as the utopian's counterfactual universe, as the romance of the socialist who believes fraternity will occur spontaneously: the one, like the others, denies what is in order to explain what is not. "Non! personne ne sait ni ne détient le secret de l'avenir." Humanity will be prey to the myth of its essential goodness for so long as Providence has a place in the world. "Toutes les difficultés sociales n'ont pas d'autre origine."

For Blanqui, the savagery of June therefore had the quality of a confirmation: it put paid to the revolutionary stylistics – those sonorous and noble *grands mots* – that dressed up human sordidness, made it seem benign, escapable. "Il n'existe de sûreté pour chacun que dans l'égalité de force chez tous." The June Days, that is, shattered the concept of fraternity by repudiating its connection to human nature, thus depriving it of self-sufficiency, of its *raison d'être* within a curated vocabulary of progress. The concept now revealed itself to be no more than a construct of language and reason, a distorting mirror, as it were, no longer capable of refracting the "hypocrisie des passions" it mediated.⁹⁹ Henceforth, invocations of *fraternité* would require qualification: with bitterness and disillusion one began to speak of *la fraternité ouvrière*, *la fraternité socialiste*, *la fraternité bourgeoise*, and so on.¹⁰⁰ To appeal to *fraternité* after June, then, was to actualize the true extent of the historical failure, the true depth of the catastrophe, the true nature of the *crime*. It was, in short, to experience "the fall from the illusion of fraternity to the reality of fratricide," from the principle of universal analogy to the worldliness of suffering.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Blanqui, *Critique sociale*, p. 98.

⁹⁶ Blanqui, *Critique sociale*, p. 96.

⁹⁷ Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth-Century <exposé of 1939>," in *The Arcades Project*, p. 15.

⁹⁸ Blanqui, *Critique sociale*, p. 98.

⁹⁹ F. Pillon, "Le socialisme d'Auguste Blanqui," *La Critique philosophique* (1888): p. 68.

¹⁰⁰ Oehler, p. 78.

¹⁰¹ The quoted phrase comes from Debarati Sanyal, *The Violence of Modernity: Baudelaire, Irony, and the Politics of Form* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 90.

Seen from this angle, Meissonier's *omlette d'hommes* seems all the more astonishing, all the more unlikely to have appeared in 1850, never mind 1849. "Qu'est-ce donc que ceci?" Édouard Thierry protested in indignation.

Depuis qu'il y a des peintres, les peintres ont imité la mort; seulement, ils l'ont faite semblable au sommeil. L'homme qui ne vit plus ferme les yeux et dort pour ne plus s'éveiller. Meissonnier a rendu la mort telle qu'elle est, la mort sinistre et qui épouvante la vie; la mort qui a les yeux ouverts et qui n'a plus de regard dans les yeux; la mort qui garde encore l'ironie de la forme vivante et qui n'a plus le mouvement, qui n'a plus la volonté, qui n'a plus l'instinct, qui n'a plus même l'attitude et le repos de la créature humaine. Afin que rien ne manque à ce spectacle qui révolte les sens, la tête morte est encore une tête abominable. C'est plus que la mort, c'est la mort dans la misère, la mort dans les haillons, la mort dans la détresse et dans la dégradation; la mort, pas même le combat, pas même la terrible et sauvage expression de la colère dans la lutte. Rien que la mort et le massacre.¹⁰²

Thierry expected absolution. Instead, he saw the carrion of a hecatomb without consequence, the dreadful banality of killing and dying, Death the Taunter; he saw men shaped by the conditions of their class rather than plunderers justly condemned for their audacity. In short, he saw the carnage of the 26th. He goes on: "Je cherche, en effet, où sont les armes de ces hommes? Point de sabres, point de fusils, pas même un bâton...Rien que des cadavres, rien que des blouses trouées et souillées de sang sur la barricade détruite. Pas un uniforme sanglant dans la rue, pas une épaulette, l'épaulette d'or d'un de ces six généraux tués par l'insurrection, tués par les balles de l'émeute!" Not only were these omissions – this shameless implication of effects without cause – detestable; they were iniquitous, for they legitimated these rebels as victims – who guns down the unarmed? – and therefore undermined the painting's presumed intention and ideological prerogative, its responsibility, to admonish the vanquished and those who might follow in their footsteps.¹⁰³ "On ne conseille pas la paix en insultant aux vainqueurs et en parlant de colère aux vaincus. On ne persuade pas l'horreur de la guerre civile en appelant les vengeances." Vengeance for vengeance: this was the message Thierry took away. By giving these rebels the appearance of passivity, drawn "toujours" from "le même sentiment du réel," Meissonnier had, or so Thierry imagined, falsified the reason for their subjugation, made it look criminal. "Une malheureuse accusation, et presque une calomnie. Meissonnier a été mal inspiré."

This is hyperbole, of course, the bad faith of Sartre's *hating-hateful-man* whipped up into alarmist fantasy. Which is not to say, however, that Thierry's view of Meissonnier's death's-head depiction of death – this death which "garde encore l'ironie

¹⁰² Thierry, "Salon de 1851," *L'Assemblée nationale*, March 21, 1851.

¹⁰³ See also Régis Michel, "L'idiote de la peinture: essai sur l'homme de Barbizon," in *Barbizon: Malerei der Natur – Natur der Malerei* (Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1999), pp. 94-97.

de la forme vivante,” this death of the already dead – is mere projection. Much as Thierry wants heroes and villains – Cavaignac’s *vainqueurs* and *vaincus* – he cannot help but admit that the pitiful abjection of the rebels is part of the truth, or get away from a knowledge of the achievement involved in Meissonier’s way of capturing it. “The ideological dream is infiltrated by the reality it seeks to repress.”¹⁰⁴ His description of what death looks like in the picture indeed seems to me powerful and apt – stunningly, atrociously so. It points toward a constitutive quality of the painting: the irrepressible feeling in it that history has been – is being – replaced by futility. Méry, writing in the Legitunist *La Mode*, put it this way:

Le peintre a mis là une rue étroite de Paris; une véritable rue d’insurrection. Fenêtres et boutiques sont fermées; pas un seul être vivant; on n’y voit pas même le chien du convoi de Vignerons. Les cadavres abondent au contraire; c’est un hâchis de chair humaine; les balles et la mitraille ont passé par là; rien n’est resté debout; la moisson est bien faite; impossible de mieux faucher une révolte; c’est un chef-d’œuvre de destruction civile; il n’y a que Paris au monde qui sache si bien travailler, quand il ne fait rien!...Voilà ce que nous faisons tous à époques périodiques; c’est notre jeu habituel; et que gagnons-nous à ce jeu déplorable? nous gagnons les mêmes ministres que nous avons chassés, les mêmes hommes que nous avons maudits, les mêmes lois que nous avons déchirées, les mêmes crises que nous avons vues; nous remettons toujours le passé au présent. Il n’y a de plus qu’un chapitre à ajouter au martyrologe des barricades de Paris.¹⁰⁵

Sabatier-Ungher, the Fourierist critic for *La Démocratie pacifique*, discerned the same arresting quality, the same measure of impotence; only he turned the action outward, toward the viewer courageous enough to look “jusqu’au bout.” He found its revelations cruel, but not like Thierry, whose dyspeptic pessimism he transposed into a tragic key:

O bataille impie où nul ne peut se faire une gloire d’avoir été victorieux, ceux qui craignent les émotions violentes détourneront les yeux de toi! Et ils auront raison; mais non, ne les détournons pas, il y a ici des leçons pour tous. La violence n’enfante pas plus la liberté qu’elle conserve l’ordre; elle donne la mort, voilà tout. Ce qu’il y a de plus cruel dans ce tableau, c’est qu’à cause de l’indécision et du

¹⁰⁴ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 132.

¹⁰⁵ Méry, “Salon de 1850,” *La mode, revue politique et littéraire* (January 5, 1851): pp. 160-161.

peu de ressort de l'effet, on est obligé de le regarder longtemps et de le détailler.¹⁰⁶

The painting, he maintained, evinced a *sang-froid* that was “plus significatif” than any message it might convey. Its eloquence was its indifference, the “horrible naïveté” with which it presented “cette hécatomb humain.” *Martyrologe* applied no more to this *tuerie* than *chef-d'œuvre*. “C'est une page d'histoire écrite dans le bronze.”

The point is this: Meissonier's painting does not have to declare its allegiances out loud; it does not have to condemn one side or valorize the other. It has no need of definitive terms. Nor, for that matter, must it banish from sight. It is enough that these rebels have been reduced to position and arrangement, that men have been replaced by matter, background by foreground, figure by ground. Here are the “facts” of civil war; here is “history.” This, it seems to me, is what Meissonier's scrupulous painting – his “horrible naïveté” – is all about; and this is what Meissonier's petrified reconstruction of the scene – and of the watercolor – reaffirms. “Le tableau contenait ce silence qui suit tout anéantissement.”¹⁰⁷ The achievement of *Souvenir de guerre civile*, that is, lies in the painter's practice, in the vividness and accuracy of his description and the promise it never quite fulfills. It obliges us to look closely and at length; but looking offers no release; it softens nothing. The painting is immovable: its detailedness leads on to a signifying deadlock. In this resides its true pessimism. Ideology, as it were, inheres in the work itself, in the way it puts *Juin* – in hypostatized and mastered form – on view for others to encounter as a conscious *souvenir*.

For ideology, then, I might just as well have said dispassion. That, at least, was how Meissonier's critics, with the exception of Thierry, described what they saw. And I might, with Alfred Dauterive, call that dispassion scientific: “une perfection extrême de détails employée à nous révéler froidement, mathématiquement, avec un scrupule tout anatomique et disséquant, les horreurs et les terreurs d'une lutte que nous voudrions pouvoir oublier, et cela sur l'échelle des infiniment petits.”¹⁰⁸ Or even, like Peisse, technological: “tout cet horrible ensemble de particularités locales, individuelles, et en quelque sorte spécifiques, ne s'imagine point. Tout cela a matériellement existé ainsi, dans telle rue, sur telle barricade, à un jour et à une heure déterminés. L'artiste l'a vu de ses yeux, et, obsédé de cette navrante image, il l'a attachée à la toile avec l'impitoyable fidélité du daguerréotype.” What is a cadaver after all, Peisse says, if not “le semblant de la forme humaine,” “une masse inerte,” “une espèce de mannequin de chair et d'os” devoid of “signification physiologique et physiognomique.”¹⁰⁹ Yet Meissonier's attentiveness in spite of horror, which Peisse could grasp only by likening it to a mechanical process – an image seized, as it were, and “attached” to a substrate – spoke of

¹⁰⁶ Sabatier-Unger, *Salon de 1851*, pp. 56-57. His passages on Meissonier were originally published in *La Démocratie pacifique* on January 26 and February 16.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Weiss, *L'esthétique de la résistance*, vol. 2, trans. Éliane Kaufholz-Messmer (Paris: Klincksieck, 1992), p. 46.

¹⁰⁸ Alfred Dauterive, “Beaux-Arts. Salon de 1851,” *Le Pays*, February 14, 1851.

¹⁰⁹ Peisse, “Salon de 1850-1851.”

more than just an adherence to hard facts, more than just a conformity to what was already there; it accounted, Peisse believed, for the painting's stubborn refusal to coalesce, its dis-aggregation, that is, into so many fragments, no one detail carrying more weight than any another – indeed, each possessing its own autonomy. Deadly, grim evenness was, for Peisse, the distinctive quality of the painting, at once its fidelity and its pitilessness, the inhuman character of its execution and the work of decomposition it turned out.

Bodies exposed as mere messy materiality: here resides the real sign of death in *Souvenir de guerre civile*. Peisse gets this right, I think; so, in his own way, does Thierry. Exacting and intimate, yet scientific, seemingly without rhetoric, “microscopique,”¹¹⁰ the descriptiveness of Meissonier's painting scatters its image of rebellion like grapeshot, even as it reaffirms, by means of the same process, the compactness of the inert mass of men laid out across the picture's surface. *Ils manquent d'effet. Les prolétaires manquent d'effet*. The horizontality of these men – their lowness, their indiscriminate mixing with each other, their association with a revealed ground level – moves them, as it were, into another social space. The proletarian *appears* in Meissonier's picture. He has been given the colors of the *drapeau tricolore*, a political symbol after February which stood for the coherence and continuity of the Nation – that is, not so much against the *drapeau rouge* as for its sublation. “La France et le drapeau tricolore,” Lamartine once said, “c'est une même pensée.”¹¹¹ *Souvenir de guerre civile* points up this fiction, jams its codes; it turns on the actuality of the proletarian body. Meissonier has exchanged the dematerializing tactics of his peers for something far more incisive: he forces us to look true insignificance in the face.

¹¹⁰ J.-J. Arnoux, “Beaux-Arts. Salon de 1850-1851,” *La Patrie*, April 1, 1851. Dauger employs the same language.

¹¹¹ Lamartine, *Œuvres complètes (mémoires politiques II)*, vol. 38 (Paris, 1863), p. 380.

CHAPTER THREE

BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE¹

He has two antagonists: The first pushes him from behind, from his origin [Ursprung]. The second blocks the road in front of him. He struggles with both. Actually the first supports him in his struggle with the second, for the first wants to push him forward; and in the same way the second supports him in his struggle with the first; for the second of course is trying to force him back. But it is only theoretically so. For it is not only the two protagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions? However that may be, he has a dream that some time in an unguarded moment – it would require too, one must admit, a night darker than any night has ever been yet – he will spring out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience of such warfare, as judge over his struggling antagonists.²
 – Franz Kafka, in “He: Notes from the Year 1920.”

Si j'en réchappe, je sais que je devrai rompre avec l'arôme de ces années essentielles, rejeter (non refouler) silencieusement loin de moi mon trésor, me reconduire jusqu'au principe du comportement le plus indigent comme au temps où je me cherchais sans jamais accéder à la prouesse, dans une

¹ Two texts warrant noting straightaway: Hannah Arendt's *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (London: Penguin Books, 2006) and T. J. Clark's "For a Left with No Future" (*New Left Review* 74 (March-April 2012): pp. 53-75). Both are fundamental throughout this chapter, as much for the questions they raise as the responses they go on to develop. The epigraphs for this chapter, in addition its title, come from Arendt; if once or twice I capture something of their true force, I owe it to her extraordinary elaboration of them here and in *The Life of the Mind*.

² Kafka, "He: Notes from the Year 1920," in *The Great Wall of China: Stories and Reflections*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), pp. 276-77. Willa and Edwin Muir translate *Ursprung* as "birth." I have chosen, the better to suit my purposes, to give it a more literal gloss – "origin."

*insatisfaction nue, une connaissance à peine entrevue et une humilité questionneuse.*³

– René Char, in *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, 1943-44.

In the first (and penultimate) issue of *Le Salut public*, Baudelaire described the February Revolution as if describing a work of art. “Depuis trois jours,” he recalled from the 27th,

la population de Paris est admirable de beauté physique... Les physionomies sont illuminées d'enthousiasme et de fierté républicain. Ils voulaient, les infâmes, faire la bourgeoisie à leur image – tout estomac et tout ventre – pendant que le Peuple geignait la faim. Peuple et bourgeoisie ont secoué du corps de la France cette vermine de corruption et d'immoralité! Qui veut voir des hommes beaux, des hommes de six pieds, qu'il vienne en France! Un homme libre, quel qu'il soit, est plus beau que le marbre.⁴

That Baudelaire, amid the festival atmosphere of late February, turned to the language of aesthetics is in itself hardly surprising; it was, after all, the language he knew best, and no doubt it came to him more or less instinctively. The unity he expected it to evoke is, however, another matter. Not unlike Michelet eighteen years earlier, Baudelaire was sure he had just borne witness to the fulfillment of the Revolution and hence of History, the final victory, as it were, of human freedom over fatality. Incited by the call of *Le Droit*, “the people,” he believed, had risen from the earth like a *géant* and, on the barricade, assumed its role as the New Colossus. And it was for him, as it had been for Michelet, the emergence of “the people” as a historical agent and the cross-class fraternity it emblemized that made the Revolution a reality. “The people,” that is, had represented itself, creating in turn a new kind of public space, one that joined even as it separated: it was a space in which freedom could appear. In triumph as in battle, in form as in content, “the people,” in a word, had revealed its essential beauty. “Peuple! Tu es là, toujours présent.”⁵ The distinctive quality of Baudelaire’s account, then, pivots on the introduction of a mediating category: on the 23rd, or so Baudelaire thought at the time, art and politics – art and *life* – coincided. The sight was resplendent, the *correspondance* it bespoke intoxicating.

Fata morgana. By mid-April Baudelaire, exasperated by the bombast of the election campaign, had become an opponent of February and the “illusion lyrique” with

³ Char, *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, in *Fureur et mystère* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), pp. 137-38.

⁴ Baudelaire, “La Beauté du Peuple,” *Le Salut public*, February 27, 1848.

⁵ Baudelaire, “Au Peuple,” *Le Salut public*, February 27, 1848.

which he had come to associate it.⁶ France was being infested, as it were, yet again; only now, instead of ravenous and hypocritical “vermine,” so many Bouvards and Pécuchets, self-deceiving *candidats* who, incapable of reconciling human thought and experience, imagination and reality, took shelter beneath faddish catchphrases and sterile promises of everything – “le chant de sirènes.”⁷ These were men, that is to say, who demonstrated their *bona fides* by ventriloquizing the *belles phrases* of Lamartine or by citing the latest issue of *Le National*; they extolled the virtues of electoral politics and the inherent good of universal suffrage; in Paris, they lamented the deplorable conditions of the workers. Few if any, however, offered concrete proposals for how to realize the dreams they were peddling – mere “entrepreneurs de bonheur public,” Baudelaire eventually labeled them.⁸ They would take the Parisian vote, regardless; and Baudelaire, who inched ever closer to the anti-electoralism of Blanqui and Proudhon, knew it: “la passion démocratique et bourgeoise,” he later sneered at the hallowed practice, “qui nous a...si cruellement opprimés.”⁹ He would write in defense of the May 15 invasion, which, having espoused a view of human nature reminiscent of Blanqui’s, he considered an expression of humanity’s fallen state. “Toujours le goût de la destruction,” he described the original impulse of the invaders. “Goût légitime, si tout ce qui est naturel est légitime.”¹⁰ In June he sided with the rebellion as he would again, a few years later, on December 2, 1851. Only this time, as Louis-Napoléon’s henchmen made their rounds, “the people” chose not to put up a fight. Quite the opposite, in fact: at the plebiscite of December 21 “the people,” whose right to vote had just been restored, endorsed the *coup d’état* by an overwhelming majority and thereby “democratically” legitimated Louis-Napoléon’s seizure of power. The Seraphim of the Enlightenment project had revealed their other, dark side: political rights, *les droits du citoyen*, and natural rights, *les droits de l’homme*, now existed in open contradiction. Appalled by the display of collective complicity, Baudelaire succumbed at last to political disillusionment.

On March 5, shortly after the *pro forma* election of 1852 restocked the National Assembly with Bonapartist yes-men, Baudelaire wrote to Narcisse Ancelle to explain: “Vous ne m’avez pas vu au vote; c’est un parti pris chez moi. *Le 2 Décembre m’a physiquement dépolitiqué. Il n’y a plus d’idées générales. Que tout Paris soit orléaniste, c’est un fait, mais cela ne me regarde pas. Si j’avais voté, je n’aurais pu voter que pour moi. Peut-être l’avenir appartient-il aux hommes déclassés?*”¹¹ Auguste Poulet-Malassis received a similar set of justifications on March 20. Yet here, in the second letter, Baudelaire thought to activate his estrangement, to turn disenfranchisement into something of an intention, an act of *autocensure*, a means of exorcism: “J’aimerais assez ne voir que *deux partis* en présence, et je hais ce *milieu* pédant et hypocrite qui m’a mis au pain sec et au cachot. Tout cela me divertit beaucoup. Mais je suis décidé à rester désormais étranger à toute la polémique humaine, et plus décidé que jamais à poursuivre

⁶ Richard D. E. Burton, *Baudelaire and the Second Republic: Writing and Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 108-110; Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, p. 166. The phrase “illusion lyrique” is Philippe Vigier’s (*La Seconde République* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967).

⁷ Oehler, p. 128.

⁸ Baudelaire, “Assommons les pauvres!,” in *Œuvres complètes*, p. 349.

⁹ Baudelaire, “Pétrus Borel,” in *Œuvres complètes*, p. 1099.

¹⁰ Baudelaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu*, p. 1200.

¹¹ Baudelaire, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 188.

le rêve supérieur de l'application de la métaphysique au roman."¹² The shift, though perhaps subtle, is not without critical significance: it gives Baudelaire's withdrawal from the public sphere an iconoclastic bite, his disavowal a destructive character: it slices through the myth of a politics he formerly embraced – a politics of “the people,” of popular sovereignty and collective action, which is to say, a politics that aligns presence with reality, Revolution with the “plaisir naturel de la démolition”¹³ – by means of *autodénunciation*.

What the terms of Baudelaire's retreat bring into focus is this: rather than liquidate the Revolution's symbolic legacy and, *a fortiori*, its claim to represent the contemporary political body, the 1851 *coup d'état* and the plebiscite that followed signaled its re-enchantment. The renewed faith of “the People,” as it were, in the power of Republican institutions – and universal suffrage was the Republican institution *par excellence* – made it an unwitting accomplice to its own subjugation. Twice more would “the people” repeat this Lenten ritual: first on November 21, when it authorized the Prince-President to extend his mandate, and then again, on December 10, when it endorsed the return to Empire. Baudelaire summed up his rage at the inveterate torpor and passivity of his compatriots in *Mon cœur mis à nu*:

En somme, devant l'histoire et devant le peuple français, la grande gloire de Napoléon III aura été de prouver que le premier venu peut, en s'emparant du télégraphe et de l'Imprimerie nationale, gouverner une grande nation.

Imbéciles sont ceux qui croient que de pareilles choses peuvent s'accomplir sans la permission du peuple, – et ceux qui croient que la gloire ne peut être appuyée que sur la vertu.

Les dictateurs sont les domestiques du peuple, – rien de plus, – un foutu rôle d'ailleurs, – et la gloire est le résultat de l'adaptation d'un esprit avec la sottise nationale.¹⁴

For Baudelaire, as Debarati Sanyal has suggested, the perversion of participatory democracy into a consensual act of self-abnegation doomed the possibility of an active and communal political practice, establishing instead a paradoxical world in which neither dictator nor subject was an agent. The two, rather, blindly colluded in the production and perpetuation of a mass delusion: “la sottise nationale.”¹⁵ The fog of spectacle, in short, had eclipsed politics; or to be more precise, it had technologized and therefore dehumanized politics, veiling present realities with the beguiling illusion of democratic consensus. Here, then, was the new system of representation, the new image of fraternity and social harmony, and it turned on the convergence of “dictateur” and “domestique.”

¹² Baudelaire, *Correspondance*, p. 189.

¹³ Baudelaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu*, p. 1200.

¹⁴ Baudelaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu*, p. 1211.

¹⁵ Sanyal, *The Violence of Modernity*, p. 77.

And thus the Ideal – the Colossus – turns to pitch. Supplement the lines above with these, also from *Mon cœur mis à nu*: “Être un homme utile m’a paru toujours quelque chose de bien hideux./1848 ne fut amusant que parce que chacun y faisait des utopies comme des châteaux en Espagne./1848 ne fut charmant que par l’excès même du ridicule.” Or this one: “Il y a dans tout changement quelque chose de l’infâme et d’agréable à la fois, quelque chose qui tient de l’infidélité et du déménagement. Cela suffit à expliquer la révolution française.” Or better still, these, which frame the others: “La Révolution et le culte de la Raison prouvent l’idée du sacrifice./La superstition est le réservoir de toutes les vérités...La Révolution, par le sacrifice, confirme la superstition.”¹⁶ I do not wish to overburden these declarations; they are clearly fragmentary, sharply pointed yet elliptical *fusées* launched, from the mid ‘50s, at a triumphant bourgeoisie. Their tone, nonetheless, is remarkably sober – full of bitterness, to be sure, but smelling not so much of resentment or bad faith as of spleen and “unhappy consciousness.” I find it hard, that is, not to be struck by the image of “Revolution” that emerges from them, how it turns predestined failure to use. Defiantly anti-utopian, resolutely opposed to popular notions of progress – “l’homme civilisé,” he writes elsewhere, “invente la philosophie du progrès pour se consoler de son abdication et de sa déchéance”¹⁷ – these *fusées* work to salvage Revolution by striking at its roots. “Moi,” Baudelaire later declaimed, “quand je consens à être républicain, je fais le mal le sachant. Oui! Vive la Révolution! Toujours! Quand même! Mais moi je ne suis pas dupe, je n’ai jamais été dupe! Je dis Vive la Révolution! comme je dirais: Vive la Destruction! Vive l’Expiation! Vive le Châtiment! Vive la Mort!”¹⁸

What these passages from *Mon cœur mis à nu* do – it is the mark they bear of Baudelaire’s dualistic view of mankind, his acute sense that Enlightenment rationalism and the lived experience of humanity’s Fallenness are incompatible – is replace the assimilation of revolutionary and natural destruction with a sisyphian delusion, a mirror image of the terrestrial paradise: “suprématie de l’idée pure chez le chrétien comme chez le communiste babouviste.”¹⁹ Allied with the cult of Reason, which merely redresses the occultism it claims to negate, Revolution turns out to be just another kind of irrationalism; and the act of sacrifice performed in its name, whose blood-letting purges iniquitous institutions only to allow the erstwhile content of superstition to flourish, takes on the quality of a ritual offering: the new life it promises to create must be taken on faith.²⁰ Yet Reason, like the deity whose authority it usurps, is insatiable. The old power proves inescapable; it merely shifts its shape, taking its revenge by colonizing the new forms that society produces: in place of God and King, then, the technocratic State, *le quotidien bourgeois*, and the banalization of violence, whose manifestation is civil war. “Toute révolution a pour corollaire le massacre des innocents.”²¹ Born of the Enlightenment, the Revolution fulfills its reality by reverting to mythology, cloaking the catastrophe it engenders – the self-sufficiency of instrumental reason, the phantasmagoria

¹⁶ Baudelaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu*, pp. 1200-1201.

¹⁷ Baudelaire, “Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe,” in *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires* (Paris, 1897), p. xii.

¹⁸ Baudelaire, “Argument du livre sur la Belgique,” in *Œuvres complètes*, p. 1298.

¹⁹ Baudelaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu*, p. 1214.

²⁰ Richard Klein, “Baudelaire and Revolution: Some Notes,” *Yale French Studies* 39 (1967): p. 90.

²¹ The dictum appears on a drawing of Baudelaire Nadar executed in preparation for his *Panthéon Nadar* (1854).

of happiness, the quietus of *paradis artificiels* – with the mystique of progress. Its truth resides in its fetish character.

Nowhere does Baudelaire stage the agony of the Second Republic more keenly, with greater self-awareness than in “Le Gâteau,” a prose poem of 1862. The poem turns on its conclusion, a wry perversion of *la beauté du peuple*: “Il y a donc un pays superbe où le pain s’appelle du *gâteau*, friandise si rare qu’elle suffit pour engendrer une guerre parfaitement fratricide!”²² Uttered in sadness, these words form the melancholy refrain with which the poem’s narrator, a *promeneur solitaire* brutally returned to the sordid world of men, submits to final disillusionment. Only moments earlier, this *promeneur*, his thoughts fluttering with a “légèreté égale à celle de l’atmosphère,” believed he had taken leave of “les passions vulgaires” – of hatred and profane love – believed he had, in fact, found “parfaite paix” with himself and with the universe in the “noblesse irrésistible” of an idyllic landscape. So enchanting indeed was this communion that, surrendering to Rousseauvian reverie, he even began to reflect on the natural goodness of man: “dans ma parfaite béatitude et dans mon total oubli de tout le mal terrestre, j’en étais venu à ne plus trouver si ridicules les journaux qui prétendent que l’homme est né bon.” No doubt *Le Salut public*, the adoring journalist Baudelaire had been, figured among these purveyors of unfulfilled wish-images. The narrator’s ascension to the heights of beatific innocence, token of a redeemed correspondence between the human spirit and the natural world, lasts less than a page: out of compassion he has offered a piece of bread to a starving *gamin* which, to his horror, precipitates a harrowing battle between the “petit sauvage” and his covetous twin, the two children ferociously tearing at one another until the scandalous prize – seized now by “l’usurpateur,” now by its “légitime propriétaire” – disintegrates, the crumbs scattered like the grains of sand into which it vanishes. Abrupt and jarring, to be sure, is this wayfarer’s sobering-up, tragic his fall from happiness, his homecoming. Weighed down by the darkness that has begun to envelop the landscape, the “joie calme” that delighted his soul having “totalement disparu,” he repeats his splenetic refrain “sans cesse.”

The whole substance of politics in the late ‘40s and early ‘50s exists in these words of foiled desire – in the illusion of happiness and goodness and its constant defeat in the face of ignoble humanity, in the misrecognition of bread for cake and the dispersive properties of sand, in the corruption of the edenic correspondence and the broken link between thought and action, art and life. The space of freedom realized by this link has clouded over; occupied by the struggle for life, it no longer unites; it ceases to be public, common, a space in-between. Politics has assumed paradoxical form; it appears as a work of decomposition.

Il n’y a plus d’idées générales: so said Baudelaire ten years before “Le Gâteau,” on the eve of Empire. He was describing for Ancelle the physical effect of depoliticization, the splintering that accompanied the onset of *anomie*, or what Michelet, in a lecture of January 15, 1848, called the “dangers de la dispersion de l’esprit.” Before

²² Baudelaire, “Le Gâteau,” in *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 293-295. My reading of “Le Gâteau” is indebted to three others: Oehler, pp. 320-334; Sanyal, p. 90; and Françoise Meltzer, *Seeing Double: Baudelaire’s Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 21-30.

the *coup*, it looked like the countryside might side with the Left in the coming elections, for both the Assembly and the President; the *République démocratique et sociale* had appeared once again just over the horizon.²³ “Ma fureur au coup d’État. Combien j’ai essuyé de coups de fusil! Encore un Bonaparte! Quelle honte!/Et cependant tout s’est pacifié. Le Président n’a-t-il pas un droit à invoquer?”²⁴ It would seem Baudelaire knew little of the revolts in the south and south-east. No matter: by March all was quiet; votes had been cast. This was Baudelaire’s night to jump out of the fighting line: the future, he reckoned, belonged to the *déclassés*.

My account of Baudelaire’s descent into despair and disillusion, albeit schematic, is meant as prologue, to raise a set of questions about the state of politics between June 1848 and December 1851, and thus to gesture toward the moment between past and future, an interval in time which, as Arendt says, is “altogether determined by things that are no longer and by things that are not yet.”²⁵ For it is here, when everything is at risk, on the broken middle ground where the forces of past and future take on the definition of tenses, that, I believe, we ought to place Daumier’s *L’Émeute* (fig. 35). The standpoint is one of disillusion, yet not entirely – not strictly – as Baudelaire experienced it. To stand in the interval is inhabit a different relation to the present and the flow of indifferent time, a different orientation toward the political. Daumier did not dream, as it were, of jumping out of the fighting line; he did not pursue or imagine a viewpoint from above. With *L’Émeute*, Daumier stages the failure of the Revolution; but he does so – *L’Émeute* does so – tragically, from a stance that is grounded and present-centered, while exalting neither his refusal nor his marginality – that is, with none of the melodrama which has over the years made Baudelaire an irresistible point of reference, even identification for Left intellectuals. It is the vantage *L’Émeute* takes toward the Revolution that, it seems to me, renders its drama unresponsive. The specter of disillusion haunts *L’Émeute*, inheres as a shadowy presence within its fabric; the picture is tugged and shaped by indecision. Yet *L’Émeute* works against that doubt; it does not think of repressing it.

L’Émeute bears the burden of February, and a simple charting of its themes and iconography is sufficient to demonstrate how deliberate – how voluntary – was the acceptance. In it, a blonde-haired *ouvrier* in white smock leads an insurgent crowd, his arm raised in defiance, a battle-cry on his parted lips. Another worker, in *chapeau melon*, marches at his right, his abstracted features cast in shadow; a bourgeois, almost indiscernible except for the distinctive shape of his *haut-de-forme*, fills out the front line. A second bourgeois, similarly appointed, rises above the multitude from one row in; his deportment, though indicated only by the tilt of his head and the few black smudges that mark out his visage, appears strangely in sync with crowd’s *homme de tête*. Together these men, *blouse* and *habit*, press forward in a single rhythm; women and children, no more precisely detailed than the rest, figure prominently among their immeasurable ranks. Neither blood nor the smoke of gunfire darkens the protest, clouds the outcome or challenges its necessity. The barricade is suggested but absent; it exists, implicitly, as an

²³ On the myth of “1852,” see Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, pp. 15-16.

²⁴ Baudelaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu*, p. 1201.

²⁵ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 9.

orientation. Destruction and death – the ineluctable effects of revolutionary violence – remain unseen. These *émeutiers* are on the move, their actions spontaneous; they do not carry guns in their hands. The antagonism driving the rebellion, instead, has been condensed into a single gesture, one voice and one motion; it is the conviction of the crowd – its solemnity and attentiveness, its *compactness* – rather than its anger that seems to matter. This is revolution without “them.”

The indeterminable size and density of the crowd, which the flat rectangle opposite the raised fist of its guide seems to reinforce – are we to understand this as a single *manif* or as a convergence at the intersection of two streets? – affirm the sense of all-overness and coherence that provides the uprising with the substantiality of Right. The built environment gives the mass a shape, locates it, but does not curb its spread, does not designate a limiting condition. We do not see the street. This is the city as seen by the caricaturist, the continuousness and homogeneity of its architecture the result of simplification and synthesis. It does not, as it were, assert its own implacable permanence – the dreary, deadly absoluteness of its detail – over and against the vitality of those fighting for a right to it – fighting, that is, to remake it and hence to remake themselves. The flat rectangle, parallel to the planar surface it draws into the picture, poses little challenge to the diagonal of the raised fist, which directs the charge, at an angle, toward that surface and its frame, both of them seemingly incapable of containing its magnitude and force, of enclosing or excluding it. The crowd contests these boundaries and determinations, then; yet its disobedience, paradoxically, appears non-confrontational. Revolutionary negation, here, turns on a reactivation of mediations – between figure and frame, past and future, Revolution and Progress, “natural man” and “abstract citizen”:

Only when actual, individual man has taken back into himself the abstract citizen and has become a *species-being* in his everyday life, in his individual work and his individual circumstances, only when he has recognized and organized his own powers as *social* powers so that social power is no longer separated from him as *political* power, only then is human emancipation complete.²⁶

Once more we can invoke “the people” – as Nation, as *la grande famille française*. Once more we can call the Revolution beautiful, speak of *géants* and colossi, imagine a future in which words like completion, reconciliation, and wholeness express a reality rather than a desire. Yet we would be doing so – Daumier asks us to do so – after June.

We do not know when precisely Daumier painted *L'Émeute*. Proposals, whether based on stylistic or thematic grounds, have ranged widely: 1848 or 1849, the early to

²⁶ Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” in *The Portable Karl Marx*, ed. and trans. Eugene Kamenka (London: Penguin, 1983), p. 114.

mid to late '50s, even 1871.²⁷ Seeking the middle road, Bruce Laughton splits the date in two: 1848 with later interventions in the '50s.²⁸ The debate is, of course, a peculiar one to have about an artist like Daumier, so much of whose graphic work proceeded lockstep with the day-to-day rhythm of “the news.” Quibbling over dates lands us in foreign territory, maybe even dangerous territory, surely political territory.²⁹ It distances Daumier’s work from the instability and contingency of the everyday; it introduces the universal; it pits Daumier the painter against Daumier the lithographer, Art against politics; it splits Daumier’s imagery in two. Such debates are nevertheless unavoidable with his paintings, however fraught the exercise may be. More often than not Daumier left his paintings dateless, and seldom exhibited them; commissioned work was never his custom – the two Jeanron secured for him in 1848 (*La Madeleine au désert*) and 1849 (*Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*) were exceptions, responses to economic exigency and the shifting conditions of artistic production. Daumier, moreover, regularly struggled to finish his paintings, so much so that habitual non-delivery and procrastination became tropes circulated among friends and biographers; a majority of them, whatever their state of completion, remained unknown until Durand-Ruel hosted a retrospective of his work in 1878. *L'Émeute* did not figure among the 94 paintings put on view. An *esquisse* – at least that, with its implied lack of finish serving as explanation, is what the painting is generally called – *L'Émeute* traveled from one attic to another until Arsène Alexandre rediscovered it 1924.

Uncertainty over *L'Émeute*'s date of manufacture – both its taking-up and its abandonment – has engendered a considerable reluctance over the years to think through the relation of its image to history. Few doubt that the picture addresses the Revolution of 1848; yet even fewer push beyond the usual generalities, proceed to speak in particular terms about how it interacts with that history, whose distinctive qualities are confusion and ambiguity. These are not qualities *L'Émeute* is typically believed to engage. The more substantial impediment, however, has been the painting's condition: ever since its re-emergence in 1924 connoisseurs and scholars by and large have accepted – presumed, really – that most, if not all of the painting's top layer of pigment is the handiwork of someone else. K. E. Maison, when he published his *catalogue raisonné* of Daumier's *œuvre* in 1968, stated the point unequivocally: no serious student of Daumier's paintings, he maintains, could mistake the heads of *L'Émeute*'s principal figures for “authentic originals.”³⁰ He relegates *L'Émeute*, which he leaves undated, to a group of paintings attributed to Daumier that, whether over-zealously restored or completed by forgers, no longer evince Daumier's autograph “touch.” Only the “conception of its...composition” can be considered Daumier's, he insists; the revisions of another's hand – “though in this case a very able one” – are total, decisive, obvious “even in a photograph.” No

²⁷ Howard Vincent put it this way: “No one knows when [*L'Émeute*] was painted; the subject allows a wide nomination of possible dates, from the Glorious Revolution of 1830, the 1848 revolution, the bloody days of June 1848, and the coup d'état of 1851, to the holocaust of the 1871 Commune” (*Daumier and His World* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 133). At the 1999-2000 retrospective, *L'Émeute* was given the date c.1852-1858. The Phillips Collection, although part of that exhibition, continues to use the date 1848 (or later).

²⁸ Laughton, *Honoré Daumier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 67-68.

²⁹ See Michel Melot, *Daumier, l'art et la République* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2008).

³⁰ Maison, *Honoré Daumier: Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Watercolors, and Drawings*, vol. 1 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), p. 193.

documents from the period confirm Maison's claims one way or the other; we know next to nothing of the painting's whereabouts between 1879, the year Daumier died, and 1924. Against Maison, however, or at least against his confidence, we can put the treatment report conducted by The Phillips Collection in 1999, which suggests that the painting – both the chemical compounds of its pigments and its brushwork – is consistent throughout.³¹

“Touch,” style, and artistic quality: these seem to me inadequate criteria for assessing the authenticity of *L'Émeute*, regardless. At best they are provisional; at worst they belie the mystifying notion of artistic consistency that cloaks them with an air of conclusiveness. In the late '40s, Daumier was relatively new to painting; he was new to color and oil and brushes; he was new to the pliancy of stretched canvas; he was new to painting's scale (*L'Émeute* measures 87.6 x 113 cm). The late '40s and early '50s were a testing period for Daumier, a time of exploration and discovery, trial and error. That the handful of paintings he executed before 1848 are small in scale and on panel, the firmness and absorbency of which more closely approximate stone, therefore comes as nothing of a surprise: Daumier was learning how to paint; he was learning how to manipulate a different set of materials, an unfamiliar set of means. Little, perhaps, speaks more directly to the experimental and tentative quality of *L'Émeute* than Daumier's use of a damaged second-hand canvas, a portrait he likely bought on the cheap and turned on its side – hence the painting's unusual dimensions. The surface irregularities of the painting beneath *L'Émeute* show through like pentimenti, alter its texture and the density of its pigmentation. Daumier did not know how or did not care to repair the compromised substrate; either way, the foreseeable appearance of bumps, ridges, and shadow images did not deter him. Then there is his recourse to old habits when new ones failed: the outlines of the figures and the cityscape they traverse have been drawn in – I might say firmed up or locked down – with lithographic crayon. Confidence in one medium had yet to become confidence in the other. Simply put, we cannot expect consistency from Daumier's early paintings; nor should we judge the quality of their execution by measuring them against pictures we prize for being “authentic originals.” Painting, for Daumier, was still an untried practice; he did not have a coherent “style.” He could, as it were, paint *Ouvriers dans la rue* (c. 1846-48), which looks astonishingly like *L'Émeute*, and *Le Meunier, son fils et l'âne* (1849), which, although it shares *L'Émeute*'s distinctive gesture, looks nothing like it, roughly at the same time (figs 36-37).

Maison, Laughton, and the others who have puzzled over connoisseurial questions nevertheless have a point. They are right, I think, to see *L'Émeute* as a layered painting, a concretion of starts and stops, work and erasure and re-work, some done at one time, some done at another. By this I do not mean that each layer corrects the one preceding it. They are cumulative, to be sure, measures taken to differentiate one figure from the next and to secure the negativity of painting's ground as an opposite term; but they also have an additive quality, each step groping for the same elusive presence. Blocks and shapes of color then black lines then gray shadowing and charcoal hatching then patches of white or yellow highlighting have been laid down in episodic stages, each of them related but never translated into modeling; in a word, the constitutive layers of *L'Émeute* never

³¹ I would like to thank Elizabeth Steele, head conservator at the Phillips, for sharing her notes, as well as her final report, with me.

quite coalesce into unified form. Indeed, these *émeutiers* look rather flat. Nor do I mean that *L'Émeute* ought to be read like a palimpsest, unless we summon that term to clarify the relationship between the portrait and the picture Daumier painted over it. In that case, yes, *L'Émeute* operates like a palimpsest: it is a portrait of an unknown man from the 18th or 19th century rotated ninety degrees and overlaid by an image of rebellion; the many replace the individual, “the people” supplants the bourgeois. *L'Émeute* becomes palimpsestic in this respect, however, not simply because it effaces the figure that came before it, but because this effacement, this transfiguration has a memory. That is to say, *L'Émeute* shoulders the determinations of the history it mediates, the weight and violence of culture and representation. It turns, dialectically, on visibility and elision; and it internalizes that contradiction, realizes it as struggle. Whether Daumier envisioned *L'Émeute* as such is beside the point; it is the sale and re-use of the canvas – the social relations these transactions actualize, the aesthetic structures they simultaneously affirm and negate, the sense of precarity and history they cannot escape – that matter. I want to hang on to these processes and practices, to their embeddedness in time, material, and social life. What appearances make visible, what they repress are questions *L'Émeute* raises. Unlike palimpsests, however, *L'Émeute* – the construction of its image, the layers produced in the process of its making – looks backward rather than forward, toward the past rather than the future. Rather than work to fix things, it searches for itself with “une humilité questionneuse.”

The mode by which *L'Émeute* proceeds, then, is citational rather than palimpsestic, a paradoxical procedure, according to Benjamin, that both “saves and punishes.” Citation, Benjamin explains,

summons the word by its name, wrenches it destructively from its context, but precisely thereby calls it back to its origin. It appears, now with rhyme and reason, sonorously, congruously, in the structure of a new text. As rhyme, it gathers the similar into its aura; as name, it stands alone and expressionless. In citation the two realms – of origin and destruction – justify themselves before language. And conversely, only where they interpenetrate – in citation – is language consummated. In it is mirrored the angelic tongue in which all words, startled from the idyllic context of meaning, have become mottoes in the book of Creation.³²

In Benjamin’s theory of language, citation proceeds cannibalistically – “there is no idealistic but only a materialistic deliverance from myth.”³³ Its power lies in its ability not “to preserve but to purify, to tear from context, to destroy; the only power in which hope still resides that something might survive this age – because it was wrenched from

³² Benjamin, “Karl Kraus,” in *Selected Writings Volume 2, Part 2, 1931-1934*, p. 454. Beatrice Hanssen’s *Walter Benjamin’s Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings, and Angels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) has been an invaluable resource, especially pp. 114-126.

³³ Benjamin, “Karl Kraus,” p. 455.

it.”³⁴ The “origin” is its goal; and at this “origin,” which Benjamin considers a historical rather than logical category, an “eddy in the stream of becoming” rather than a genesis “revealed in the naked and manifest existence of the factual,” stands not an *a priori* condition (“purity”) but a process of restoration that is, by necessity, unfinished and incomplete (“purification”).³⁵ The discovery of an “origin” therefore has the singular element of rediscovery. In citation, then, the origin of creation and the violence of destruction are united; it proves thereby the “matrix of justice.”³⁶

1848 was a year of re-adjustments for Daumier. The Second Republic, which abolished restrictions on the press, enabled him to return to political caricature, and, at first, he availed himself of his restored freedoms. Between the 4th of March and the 9th he published, in sequence, *Le Gamin de Paris aux Tuileries*, *Tout est perdu! fors la caisse*, and *Dernier conseil des ex-ministres* (figs. 38-40), three lithographs that, together, celebrate the triumphant return of Delacroix’s *Liberté* – “Elle seule,” Michelet later said of her reappearance, “est chez elle en France”³⁷ – and the exile of her bourgeois form. Subscribers to *Le Charivari* could not have missed the common point of reference; the recycled poses and gestures were unmistakable, meaningful, by 1848, in and of themselves. The Revolution’s victory and its largely unimpeded evolution into a Republic nevertheless presented caricaturists with a peculiar dilemma: it pressed them, at least those left of center, to reevaluate their trade. The shared language of forms and symbols that had previously given political caricature its ideological coherence and distinct force ceased to be valid. Political lines were being redrawn: what to oppose and how to oppose it – or was it, rather, what to extol and how to defend it? – had become uncertain, disputable. When asked for more pictures of the deposed king, Daumier therefore declined: they would be pointless, he explained, out of sync with the present order of things.³⁸ He had to get to know new enemies; he had to figure out who they were; he had to see what they looked like, what a Republic that was also an enemy looked like. Not by accident, then, did Daumier refrain for most of 1848 from taking on the personalities of the new government (this, of course, would change when, in December, Eugène Cavaignac, “the butcher of June,” faced off against Louis-Napoléon, *le neveu*, for the presidency). Most of his lithographs from that year – the wryly hyperbolic *Les Alarmistes et les Alarmés*, for instance, or the anti-feminist *Les Divorceuses* or the unpublished *Ouvrier et Bourgeois* – came at politics indirectly, or rather, pictured politics differently, as a matter of performance and affect, the lineaments of class difference, and the eroding boundary between the private and public spheres. A decade of censorship had taught Daumier a great deal about the relationship between politics and *le quotidien*; it had taught him to look for the everyday detail and to see in it

³⁴ Benjamin, “Karl Kraus,” p. 455.

³⁵ Benjamin, p. 451, 455. For Benjamin’s definition of “origin,” from which I have drawn these two passages, see *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 45-46.

³⁶ Benjamin, “Karl Kraus,” p. 454.

³⁷ Letter to Daumier dated March 30, 1851. Michelet, *Correspondance générale*, vol. 6 (1849-1851), ed. Louis Le Guillou (Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion, 1996), p. 719.

³⁸ Champfleury, *Histoire de la caricature moderne* (Paris, 1865), p. 102.

the true measure and expression of the human condition in its present form. For the time being, however, Daumier wanted to work with the Republic, to trust in the new politics. Needless to say, the impulse was alien to him.

The shift occurred sometime around March 19th. That day *Le Charivari* published Daumier's final lithograph of Louis-Philippe, a follow-up to *Tout est perdu!* in which the monarch's bloated profile has been struck on a coin memorializing him as the "dernier roi des français" (of course he was also the first). The least forgiving of the series, *Projet d'une médaille* (fig. 41) is at the same time, and perhaps ironically, the one that smells most distinctly of the early '30s: a reprise of Préault's *Aulus Vitellius*, a medallion rejected by the Salon jury in 1834, it pins the legacy of the July Monarchy to a dastardly *volte-face* and the carnage of *rappel à l'ordre* – in short, to the moment when the title "roi des français" ceased to control the development of its constitutive contradiction. Daumier, it would seem, decided to give final vent.

Four days earlier the Ministry of the Interior had issued an *appel aux artistes* inviting France's painters and sculptors to participate in open competitions for a symbolic figure of the Republic.³⁹ The logic driving the *appel* was straightforward: stained by the blood-letting of the Terror, the symbols of 1792 had to be refashioned, given a tranquil stability that spoke of peaceful progress and national unity rather than fear and endless war. Liberty had triumphed once and for all; and a new era – the era of freedom – had begun. The competitions, then, were to provide the Republic with a new symbol capable of realizing the new society it represented; they were to affirm 1848 as the culmination of the "revolutionary tradition."

We do not know what, exactly, compelled Daumier to try his hand; a famous anecdote, first reported by Edmond Duranty in 1878, had it that Gustave Courbet and François Bonvin gave the decisive push.⁴⁰ The encouragement of friends notwithstanding, entering the *concours* was a gamble for Daumier, whose heroes, till then, typically wore smocks and printer's caps and whose public expected a good laugh, even when – perhaps especially when – it was the butt of the joke. The competition would introduce him as a painter. What is more, Daumier regularly expressed an aversion to allegory, its clever analogies and the glib rationalism with which it masked the incommensurability of its forms. "Que le diable emporte les allégories qui n'ont ni queue ni tête!": this was the response he gave Banville when, a few months later, the poet asked him to design a new masthead for *Le Corsaire*. He then elaborated, tongue-in-cheek: "Comprenez donc qu'un journal n'est pas un navire, et qu'un corsaire n'est pas un écrivain; or, n'importe comment on s'y prene, on aboutira toujours à cette ineptie: un journaliste qui écrit avec un canon, ou un militaire qui se bat avec une plume! Pas de ça, Lisette! On ne mange pas de ce pain-là dans ma famille!"⁴¹ "On ne dessine pas un mot,"

³⁹ On the competition, Marie-Claude Chaudonneret's *La figure de la République: le concours de 1848* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1987) is indispensable, not only for the historical and iconographical detail of its account, but also for the comprehensive collection of documents it reprints. For a richer discussion of the politics surrounding the competition, see Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, esp. pp. 63-69. See also Chantal Georget's *1848: La République et l'art vivant* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1998), which addresses the "new" as a political and iconographical problem facing the *concurrents*. My discussion of the competition and Daumier's place in it relies a great deal on all three.

⁴⁰ Edmond Duranty, "Daumier (2e et dernier article)," *Gazette des beaux-arts* (1878): pp. 543-544.

⁴¹ Banville, *Mes Souvenirs*, p. 166.

he insisted in another context, “on dessine un geste, une expression.”⁴² The wager made sense, all the same. The competition presented an opportunity to change course, to realize the Revolution differently, intimately, radically. Here Daumier had a chance to learn how to make pictures for rather than against.

Trouble was, in the first month after the revolution no one quite knew what the Republic was or how it should be represented, how to heed its complexity while limiting its abstractness, how, that is, to give flesh – *donner un corps* is the French expression – to a concept still in dispute.⁴³ The solution for most painters was simply to toe the official line. At some point in March a sculptor – we do not know who – petitioned the Ministry of the Interior for instruction, and a Ministry spokesman – some speculated it was Ledru-Rollin himself – replied with a set of guidelines as cloudy as they were ideologically to the point:

Votre composition doit réunir en une seule personne *la liberté, l'égalité et la fraternité*. Cette trinité est le caractère principal du sujet. Il faut donc que les signes des trois puissances se montrent dans votre œuvre. Votre *République* doit être assise pour faire naître l'idée de stabilité dans l'idée du spectateur. Si vous étiez peintre, je vous dirais non pas d'habiller votre figure en tricolore, si l'art s'y oppose, mais cependant de faire dominer les couleurs nationales dans l'ensemble du tableau. J'allais oublier le bonnet. J'ai dit plus haut que la République résumait les trois puissances qui forment son symbole. *Vous n'êtes donc pas maître d'ôter ce signe de la Liberté*. Seulement arrangez-vous pour en quelque sorte le transfigurer...Gardez-vous aussi des airs trop belliqueux. Songez à la *force morale* avant tout. La République est trop forte pour avoir besoin de lui mettre le casque en tête et la pique à la main...Comme il n'y a pas de précédens pour cette figure, tout est à faire. Si vous mettez le faisceau, *supprimez la hache*.⁴⁴

It seems clear from the odd uniformity of the entries that the Ministry's “program” made the rounds. Delécluze received a copy of the missive early on, and *L'Artiste* published it in full on April 30th.⁴⁵ The assist was no doubt welcome, even if it raised as many questions as it answered; what its terms lacked in detail was made up for by the disclosure of expectations. Few painters thought to introduce their own ideas. On April 17, nearly 700 entries were shown to the public, just in time for those eager to get a look at the Republic before casting their ballots on the 23rd.

⁴² Duranty, p. 534.

⁴³ See Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, pp. 63-64.

⁴⁴ Cited in *L'Artiste* vol. 1 (1848): p. 112.

⁴⁵ Delécluze, “Concours national. Figure symbolique de la République française,” *Journal des débats*, May 2, 1848.

The competition proved a shambles. When the Louvre opened its doors on the 17th, critics joined hands with the caricaturists, and together, in a common tongue, jeered as they moved from one sketch to the next. Haussard's overview – written in disgust more than disappointment, indignation more than dismay – is typical: “Le public rit, nos artistes rougissent, notre école est calomniée. Les quatre ou cinq cents esquisses peintes, surtout, dépassent tout ce qu'on peut imaginer de turpitudes grotesques... Les ennemis du principe même des concours, en matière de Beaux Arts, triomphent ici manifestement.”⁴⁶ Critics like Haussard were perfectly willing to overlook matters of style and execution – bad painting, at this early stage, could be written off to a shortage of time and preparation. Banality of thought, on the other hand, could not: the stakes were too high, especially after the jury-free Salon, by all accounts a failed experiment in democratic reorganization, mooted its own reason. At the end of April the political ideals underwriting the 1848 Salon were coming to a head: art and republicanism had been assigned the task of determining the possibilities and limits of the other. And the result, nearly everyone agreed, was monotony and pastiche, a convergence of Republics as turgid as they were devoid of ideas. “Nous renonçons à fouiller et à distinguer dans le chaos,” Haussard's obloquy concludes. Thoré urged a majority of the contestants to take up a new profession.⁴⁷

What vexed critics, then, was that instead of exegesis and revelation – hard-working syntheses, irrefutable unities of form and idea, the concept of the Republic made real, given a body, an existence – they saw confused, often nonsensical collections of ill-fitting emblems and implausible attributes, none of them quite to the purpose, none of them of the moment. “Soyons républicains, mais soyons aussi de notre temps et de notre pays!”⁴⁸ The conceptual mysteries of the Republic had simply been translated into visual form, “véritables *rébus*”⁴⁹ – that is, instead of a *figure*, distinct and self-sufficient, so many flailing attempts to define the Republic by burying it beneath piles of runic ornament, to make their meaning the Republic's meaning, to fill out the concept of the Republic, as it were, with extraneous, fungible bric-à-brac, background noise and philological niceties: “ces épiques emblèmes de boutique,” as Laurent Jan phrased it.⁵⁰ Delécluze dismissed the whole lot as “complètement insignifiant.”⁵¹ He was not unsympathetic, however:

je ne puis approuver ni même saisir l'idée de *réunir en une seule personne la Liberté, l'Égalité et la Fraternité*, qui ne sont pas des *puissances* comme le dit l'auteur du Programme, mais des *avantages*, des *bienfaits* qui doivent émaner de la République française. Autour de la figure symbolique de la République on pourrait donc, à la rigueur, en joindre trois autres accessoires; mais alors ce serait un

⁴⁶ Haussard, “Figure de la République: concours de peinture, de sculpture et de gravure en médaille,” *Le National*, May 1, 1848.

⁴⁷ Thoré, *La Vraie République*, May 2, 1848.

⁴⁸ Laurent Jan, “Portrait de la République,” *Le Siècle*, November 27, 1848.

⁴⁹ Delécluze.

⁵⁰ Jan.

⁵¹ Delécluze.

groupe en tableau, et non pas *une figure* symbolique, comme on l’a demandé.

At fault, in Delécluze’s estimation, were not the artists themselves – at least not them alone – but the muddled demands of the competition and the incommodiousness of allegory, which restricted their resources to desiccated emblem books and hoary mythologies, the given and already known. They had been dealt a losing hand. Paul Mantz put it this way: “Le passé, consulté sur le symbol de la République de 1848, ne peut rien donner de fécond: c’est son propre cœur que l’artiste doit interroger.”⁵² Rather than possibilities critics detected only limits; rather than the new, only the out-of-date. “Malheur à ceux qui, lorsqu’il s’agit d’une idée nouvelle, se souviennent des forms anciennes et restent les esclaves du passé!”⁵³ “Winners” had to be chosen, nonetheless. Daumier’s entry placed eleventh, and his sketch, along with nineteen others (initially, the number was capped at three), were shown again in June. On the 12th, the government paid each of the “winners” 500 francs to rework their sketches “en grand.” The final round of judgments was scheduled for October.

Despite the lukewarm reception it received from the judges, Daumier’s version of the Republic (fig. 42) was singled out by critics as one of the competition’s few successes. Champfleury considered it without peer, and saw in its *figure symbolique* the coincidence of political and cultural renewal:

Personne n’oubliera jamais cette triste exhibition des Républiques à l’École des Beaux Arts. C’étaient des Républiques rouges, roses, vertes, jaunes, en marbre, en pierre, en ivoire, rissolées, culottées, grattées, ratissées; des Républiques en habit à ramage, en garde nationale, en robes de soie, en robes de laine; des Républiques vêtues de chaînes, vêtues d’attributs, vêtues de rien de tout.

– Ah dit le citoyen Thoré qui fit un *mot* ce jour-là, je ne trouve pas ici la vraie République!

[...]

Le citoyen Thoré, qui ne trouvait pas la *vraie* République dans ce concours, n’avait pas vu, au premier étage de l’École des Beaux Arts, perdue dans un cénacle de peintures odieuses, un toile simple, sérieuse et modeste.

Une forte femme assise et deux enfants suspendus à sa mamelle, à ses pieds, deux enfants lisent. L’idée est très nette.

La République nourrit ses enfants et les instruit.

Ce jour-là, j’ai crié vive la République, car la République avait fait un grand peintre.

Ce peintre, c’est Daumier!⁵⁴

⁵² Mantz, “École des Beaux-Arts. Concours pour la Figure de la République,” *La Vraie République*, June 18, 1848.

⁵³ Mantz.

⁵⁴ Champfleury, “Revue des Arts et des Ateliers,” *Le Pamphlet*, September 3-6, 1848.

This is inflated criticism; and the potshots Champfleury takes at Thoré, who founded *La Vraie République* in March and, in its pages, linked the truthfulness of the Republic to the abolition of the proletariat, belie a cynicism symptomatic of the political reorientations that crystallized in the *après-juin*.⁵⁵ Champfleury wrote these lines in early September; by then, *La Vraie République* had long since succumbed to the reaction – it was one of several journals Cavaignac shut down – and Thoré, threatened with arrest, had gone underground. Come September, that is, Thoré’s Republic was nowhere to be seen. As Champfleury’s faulty memory makes plain – he mistakenly adds a fourth child to the sketch he describes – neither was Daumier’s. More than cynical, however, or, I should say, part and parcel of the bad faith that engenders it, Champfleury’s barbs are, above all, confused, misleading simplifications of a critical position he then adopts as his own. For Thoré, symbolic figures drawn from the institutionalized forms of traditional allegory were always untrue, experiments in alchemy rather than authentic expressions of the ideas for which they had been created; divorced from the actuality of thought and experience, rooted as it were in “formes mortes” whose transmission rendered them powerless in order to retain their material content, they reflected not “la Sagesse moderne,” but persisting inequalities and the ongoing estrangement of second nature.⁵⁶ The true symbols of modern life, in Thoré’s view, could not be discovered by reason: the intrinsic meanings of the material world, he thought, remained hidden to those who acknowledged only mimetic processes of interpreting it; the artist’s imagination had to pry them loose, had to liberate them.⁵⁷ The truth value of a symbol – the active meaning it had for its present – would of necessity be coextensive with the artist’s intervention as a subjective agent: “L’avènement d’une idée est toujours l’avènement d’une génération.”⁵⁸ Daumier would not have disagreed. Neither did Champfleury: “la République avait fait un peintre: DAUMIER!”⁵⁹ Still, Champfleury’s attempt to redeem the Republic – “la vraie République” – by likening Daumier the painter to her children tells us a good deal about Daumier’s sketch and the intractability of its image.

La République nourrit ses enfants et les instruit. It is an apt description, admirable for its concision, poignant in its recognition that it must not be otherwise. Perceiving the import of Daumier’s Republic depends on it. Champfleury is right: “l’idée est très nette.” Daumier worked hard to make it so. Of course he could not dispense with time-honored iconographies altogether; the Republic could not do without a few telltale accessories: a tricolor flag topped with a Gallic cock, classical drapes and a crown of laurel. These were invariables, the ABCs of the Republican idiom. The Republic had to be recognizable. But he could clean it up, strip it down, purge it of hieroglyphics, of the rainbows, bee hives, clasping hands, embracing cherubs, masons’ triangles, lions, swords, scales, and all the rest, all those ciphers that jostle one another in the canvases of his competitors. He could ration its forms, make them massive rather than prolix; he could

⁵⁵ “Sans la réforme sociale, il n’y a point de vraie République. Si l’Assemblée n’abolissait pas bravement le prolétariat social, il faudrait continuer, au nom de l’égalité, la révolution engagée au nom de la liberté. (Est-ce clair?)” Thoré, *La Vraie République*, March 28, 1848.

⁵⁶ Thoré, “Artistes contemporains – M. Eugène Delacroix.”

⁵⁷ See McWilliam, pp. 181-187.

⁵⁸ Thoré, “Artistes contemporains – M. Eugène Delacroix.”

⁵⁹ Champfleury, “Concours de Républiques: Daumier et Préault,” in *Œuvres posthumes: Salons 1846-1851* (Paris, 1894), p. 98.

give it children rather than things, locate its value in the relationships it maintains and the actions it performs rather than the goods it accumulates, in situations rather than objectifications, verbs rather than nouns and adjectives. In a word, he could reduce the allegorical dimension of the Republic to a minimum; and in so doing he could resist, as much as possible, the propensity to assimilate incompatible worlds, to conjure up the spirits of the past to make sense of new ideas and to guarantee their significance by assigning them borrowed meanings – in short, to dress up the Republic in the guise of its former masters. By then the gods and heroes of the past – just look, for example, at any one of the fifty lithographs that make up the series *Histoire Ancienne* (1841-1843) – had come to represent, for Daumier, so many bourgeois affectations, so much hypocrisy and self-delusion, bathos instead of tragedy.

What Daumier has done is substitute plain language for the additive and desultory syntax of his competitors, their reliance, as it were, on stilted analogies and meanings by proxy. He divests the setting of time and place, makes it uniform and abstract, universal but not mythic or sacred or cosmological; it is blank, quiet, public – public because undivided, because unenclosed. He rakes a harsh light across the foreground, simplifying the picture's forms and reinforcing the doggedly drawn outlines that circumscribe its monumental figures and affirm their difference from the space they inhabit. He anchors the composition by giving it the balance and structure of an equilateral triangle (“Donner des ailes à la République! Imprudents! C'est faire croire qu'elle pourrait s'envoler!”⁶⁰). Instead of blending his pigments, he applies them in broad, thick layers – light here, dark there; where colors do mix, they turn gray and flat, something between shadow and description, form and absence. Daumier handles paint as if he were modeling clay, as if he were laying it over a mold with indefinite edges; he relies on the movement of his brush to confirm the basic shape of the form he has blocked in. There is a certain coarseness, even crudeness to Daumier's Republic and its manufacture; the signs of his effort remain in evidence. Again, I think Champfleury's intuitions are correct: the painting is simple, serious, and modest; these are its salient qualities, its basic tonality. Only read the three adjectives as inflections of one another rather than as a series. The meaningfulness of any one of them, it seems to me, turns on its reflexive relation to the other two. The point is this: if Daumier adopts a classical language he adapts it to a different kind of public statement. His Republic bears its inelegance unabashedly; it makes inelegance matter.

Of course there were risks attached to proceeding by reduction: the resulting symbol might prove disobedient: it might refuse to signify the concept it claimed to embody. It might be taken, as seems to have been the case in 1848, for just another code. For the most part, for almost everyone, Daumier's *materfamilias* was inscrutable; for almost everyone, her relation to the Republic was invisible. Even allies struggled to discern an affinity between her form and her assigned content. The critic for *L'Artiste* was particularly emphatic: “très belle” as Daumier's invention was on its own terms, he contended, it had “rien en commun avec l'idée républicaine.”⁶¹ Haussard was convinced he saw only the Charity that gave Daumier's Republic her shape, and ruled the work *en dehors du concours*. The prototype, in his view, simply overwhelmed the adaptation: “La

⁶⁰ Mantz.

⁶¹ Anon., “Concours. Figure symbolique de la République,” *L'Artiste*, vol. 1 (1848): p. 109.

République,” he surmised, “n’est pas là figurée, mais déguisée.”⁶² For Mantz, the more pertinent question had to do with the intrinsic limitations of the prototype itself, which he identified with greater precision: not any Charity, but Andrea del Sarto’s. The reference was not undue: in the middle of the nineteenth century Sarto’s *Caritas* (fig. 43) was a hallowed example of its type, and Mantz, certain the distinction had merit, proffered its heroine as a demonstration in how the serenity and repose of a seated figure, when properly handled, translated into imposing grandeur and solemnity. Yet even as he pronounced Sarto’s Charity the paragon of benevolence and motherly virtue, he questioned her sustainability as a model for the Republic. As he saw it, capacity rather than over-saturation introduced the point of impasse: “La République est aussi une charité,” he concurred, “mais elle est quelque chose de plus. La force suprême doit s’allier chez elle avec la suprême tendresse. Elle est comme l’antique Themis, la loi incarnée; elle a les flancs féconds de Cérès, la chaste beauté de Diane et la prudent énergie de Minerve.”⁶³ And so on. The trouble for Mantz, in other words, was not the intention; he agreed that Charity was essential to the Republic. On her own, however, she remained undeveloped; she needed to be completed. It was here, in the elaboration, that Mantz believed Daumier had fallen short: “La chaude ébauche de M. Daumier,” he concluded, “ne saurait mieux remplir les conditions du programme. Ce n’est qu’une charité.”⁶⁴

La Vraie République published Mantz’s review on June 18, only days before the government disbanded the National Workshops. Mantz was right, as it were, to presume the Republic – again, “la vraie République” – had begun to splinter. Civil war was less than a week away; a revised grammar for politics was in the making. I suspect it was for this reason that, by herself, Charity would not do; she spoke too poignantly, too singularly of what was being lost; she made too clear what would be needed. In spite of herself, she signified the coming disintegration.

Michelet, who devoted a chapter of *La Femme* (1859) to Sarto’s Charity, stakes out another vantage from which to see her, one I think closer to Daumier’s. The vocabulary he draws on echoes Mantz’s; he too, that is, foregrounds the question of capacity, the extent to which Charity can be said to embody “force.” Only he casts her differently; he has her defy the catastrophes she witnesses.⁶⁵ What strikes Michelet about Charity, then – what, as it were, compels him to activate her and to envision the meeting of her world and his – is not the “suprême tendresse” with which she greets those she encounters – he calls it “l’émotion maternelle” – but the steadfastness she demonstrates in the face of horror.⁶⁶ Far from timid, Michelet explains, Charity is untamed, an intrepid virgin who gathers starving orphans – victims, in her view, of history’s estrangement from nature – to her. War and famine, egoism and scarcity all confront her with the same categorical imperative. It is her prerogative to repair the breach, to ensure that neither history nor nature rules in the absence of the other, that their disunity remains invisible to all but her. Should the cleft have already become perceptible, she knows she has arrived

⁶² Haussard, “Concours d’esquisses peintes,” *Le National*, June 8, 1848.

⁶³ Mantz.

⁶⁴ Mantz. For an illuminating discussion of the doubleness of Daumier’s iconography and struggle to bring the Republic and Charity together into viable symbol, see Georgel, pp. 49-56.

⁶⁵ Michelet, *La Femme* (Paris, 1860), pp. 181-189.

⁶⁶ Michelet, *La Femme*, p. 181.

too late: the malady it represents has infected root and branch. For her, however, the moment of crisis is never without hope; the havoc it wreaks leaves its deeper structures exposed: that is, it enables transformation. Faced with systemic disease, she repudiates the efficacy of “homeopathy,” which, she claims, reinforces dependency on an equilibrium already proven invalid, already proven harmful. Hers is not a simple act of liberality and care; it is not private and hence provisional. The balance itself must be recalibrated; she must reclaim the link between history and nature – “*l’unité de la foi humaine sur le devoir et sur Dieu*” – and reveal it to others.⁶⁷ The restoration of social and moral health, she believes, therefore necessitates intervention; it requires “allopathic” methods of treatment; it requires education, a complete education. “Le juge du vrai est *la conscience*,” Michelet goes on to say. “Mais il lui faut des contrôles, *l’histoire*, conscience du genre humain, et *l’histoire naturelle*, conscience instinctive de la nature... Quand les trois s’accordent, croyez.”⁶⁸

The differences between Michelet’s vision of Charity and Mantz’s doubtless owe a great deal to the years that separate their formation. Michelet came to his (self-reflexive) image of Charity – and to natural history more broadly speaking – in the mid-1850s, only after, by his account, the catastrophe of 1848 and the regression of 1852 shattered the unity of History and Progress.⁶⁹ The critic and the historian, as it were, approach her from opposite (but not *opposing*) directions – before and after the *apprentissage de la République* began spilling blood, before and after failure and loss became real. The one looks forward, in other words, the other back. Still, as Mantz makes clear, Michelet’s questions were already being asked in the spring of 1848. They were his; and they were Daumier’s. Indeed, they were Thoré’s as well.

Daumier never made good on his 500 francs. By the October deadline, he had withdrawn from the competition. We do not know for sure whether he ever set to work on the final composition. Gautier says he did, and attributes his failure to finish it on time to lassitude and inexperience.⁷⁰ Perhaps. Perhaps, as Mantz suspected, he simply could not get the image – its proper balance – right. Champfleury ventures a different sort of guess: disillusion.⁷¹ With regard to what precisely he does not explain; he offers only a vague reference to Daumier’s willful intelligence and its inclination toward doubt. I find it hard not to think that June had something to do with Daumier’s decision to choose desertion. Surely it did. On the other side of massacre, arbitrary justice, and martial law, identifying the Republic with Charity, presenting their unity as history’s reconciliation with nature, as the actualization of the commonweal, must have seemed disingenuous, if not dangerous.

⁶⁷ Michelet, *La Femme*, p. 181.

⁶⁸ Michelet, *La Femme*, p. 384.

⁶⁹ See “Comment l’auteur fut conduit à l’étude de la nature,” Michelet’s 1855 preface to *L’Oiseau* (Paris, 1858), pp. iii-lvii.

⁷⁰ Gautier, “École nationale des Beaux-Arts. Exposition des Figures du concours pour la République,” *La Presse*, December 5, 1848.

⁷¹ Champfleury, “Salon de 1849,” in *Œuvres posthumes*, p. 178.

I should like to say that Daumier began working on his “revolutionary studies” – in addition to *L'Émeute*, *Une foule* (fig. 44) and *Famille sur la barricade* (fig. 45) – sometime between June and October. At least this is my sense of the timing. We know little more about *Une foule* and *Famille sur la barricade* than we do *L'Émeute*. Hard facts pertaining to any one of them remain in short supply. It seems unlikely, all the same, that Daumier could have painted the three pictures before the cataclysm and disenchantment of June 23 – on this scholars agree. The intuition is not, as it were, without grounding altogether. Perhaps I should call it a hypothesis, then, or, better still, a question. I would like to know something of the ambitions that compelled Daumier, after June, to return to the Revolution. But even more than the desiderata – not that I wish to divorce the two – I want to understand what the belatedness of the three pictures does to the image of rebellion they construct. Here, then, is the hypothesis, flatly stated: the “revolutionary studies,” even if my time frame is off, have some connection to the doubt and disillusion that persuaded Daumier to bow out of the Republic competition. The question is how deep that connection runs.

Of the three works, only *Une foule* left Daumier's studio before his death in 1879. He had given it, at some point, to Charles-François Daubigny, and agreed to have it shown at the Durand-Ruel exhibition. It was there that the picture received its first title. No date for the painting, however, appears in Champfleury's catalogue. And while critics considered it a remarkable achievement – one even opined that its “groupe de citoyens criant aux armes” was enough to send the ghost of old Rude into fits of jealousy – they tell us nothing concrete about the painting's development.⁷² How could they, when they likely knew nothing of it themselves? The one man who might have filled in the gaps, Daubigny, died shortly after the exhibition was first announced. The closest we can come to fixing a date for *Famille sur la barricade* is to place it before September 1849: a study for the painting, a *tête d'homme* in black chalk, has a fragment of *La Commune de Paris*, a Neo-Jacobin paper that issued its final number on the 9th of that month, pasted on its back. The identification of this man – a weathered worker, white-haired and balding, his face furrowed, his eyes sunken – with *La Commune* tells us something about the political flavor of *Famille sur la barricade*. “Qu'est-ce que le peuple?” the epigraph of *La Commune* demands. “Tout.” It continues: “Vivre en travaillant ou mourir en combattant; serrons nos rangs; unissons-nous pour le maintien de la république pure.”⁷³ Adhémar presumes Daumier intended to give the drawing to one of his “amis d'extrême-gauche.”⁷⁴ The scrap of newspaper, which brings the drawing into contact with the temporality of his lithographs, tells us something as well about the extent to which Daumier kept up with politics; but not much else, at least nothing more than we can deduce for ourselves.

There can be little question, all the same, that both *Une foule* and *Famille sur la barricade*, like *L'Émeute*, refer back to February. In *Une foule* worker and bourgeois –

⁷² Cited in Jean Adhémar, *Honoré Daumier* (Paris: Éditions Pierre Tisné, 1954), p. 37. There seems to be some question about the picture to which this anonymous critic was referring. Adhémar says *Une foule*. Michael Pantazzi says *Camille Desmoulins au Palais-Royal*, suggesting that, in 1878, the latter was frequently mistaken for a painting (*Daumier 1808-1879*, p. 253). We have no way of knowing for sure.

⁷³ On *La Commune*, see Henri Alexandre Wallon, *La presse de 1848, ou revue critique des journaux publiés à Paris depuis la révolution de février jusqu'à la fin de décembre* (Paris, 1849), pp. 12-13; 127.

⁷⁴ Adhémar, p. 117.

the same as those who appear at the center of *L'Émeute* – are next to each other, face-to-face, their difference marked by a simple contrast of black and white, of *habit* and *blouse*, top hat and tousled blonde hair. How these two men move together nevertheless confirms their allegiance. The one complements the other: theirs is a unity in spite of difference. Their inclined bodies fill up most of the picture space, whose shallow depth of field, accentuated by the obtuse angle of conjoining walls, elongates the diagonal of their forward movement and intensifies the torsion – bodies one way, heads another – that dramatizes the painting's pervasive feeling of anticipation. The people in the crowd around them, who seem to surge “at a bait like fish,”⁷⁵ conform to the slope of the worker's gesture, his hand just about to push through the green door that bars their way. A white light from above and behind, which points up the long diagonal that cuts across the picture, simplifies the forms and features it strikes, drowns others in near total obscurity; the two figures at right are reduced to little more than abstract shapes and volumes. It seems almost as if these people, men and women by the look of it, share an address, as if the enclosed space we see were a courtyard where tenants have assembled, doubtless for the first time, before joining the struggle; outside lies on the other side of the door. Neither the detail nor the noise of revolt matters here. Both worker and bourgeois look backward with the same tight-lipped attentiveness. The battle-cry comes later. It is the coordinated motion of revolt, its cadence and potential and directedness, that delivers the picture's message. The painting, as T. J. Clark suggests, adopts the concision of “poster art.” “It insists, it does not quite describe.”⁷⁶

Famille sur la barricade assumes a different disposition. It brings us up close, so close, indeed, that we see only the heads and torsos of Daumier's family; nevertheless, it divulges little about the relation of this family to the conflict it evokes. There is no setting to orient us, only the dreary, uniform grayness of an abstract background. The old worker – his is the head from the chalk drawing – seems to be ushering his children either toward or away from the barricade, which, as usual, remains out-of-sight. Those in the crowd behind, who, like the family, have their backs to the light radiating at left, but appear, strangely, to be standing still, might suggest the former, toward rather than away. We cannot be sure. Some sort of disturbance, maybe the first stirrings of the fight, has occurred in the rear, compelling mother and son to look back in trepidation, the one wide-eyed, the other circumspect. The father, too, turns to see what has happened, but appears not to share the apprehension of the others; at least he does not show it. The harshness of the light he faces has cast his deep-set eyes, along with much of his left side, in shadow. His is the head of a physiognomic study, his countenance between revelation and concealment; expressiveness resides in the uneven shape his features have taken over time, as the result of cumulative experience. This is how Daumier understood the worker's endurance. A distinct feeling of somberness weighs on the painting, the heavy air of caution, even grimness. The light coming from the rear does not so much lead the way as it transfixes. Yet this is a picture of “the people” nonetheless, only here, instead of Community or *la volonté générale* or the public world of *citoyens*, “the people” is linked with the Family: it is a “domestic image of the barricade.”⁷⁷ The association

⁷⁵ Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, p. 22.

⁷⁶ Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, p. 23.

⁷⁷ Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, p. 23.

seems to have proven untenable. Daumier abandoned the painting early on, leaving it to others – this time the work of later hands seems undeniable – to retouch and finish.

If we were to merge *Une foule* and *Famille sur la barricade*, their forms and their tonalities, the result would bear a striking resemblance to *L'Émeute*. Each of the pictures has a different appearance, to be sure; Daumier has painted them in different “styles.” Yet they are made of the same stuff. They share forms, gestures, and iconographies, at times reworked and adapted, often simply transplanted from one canvas to another; they share an interest in what happens when individual bodies come together and form a single body, and in what that unity – that crowd, that mass, that family – looks like, up close, as it floods city streets and the narrow spaces of the *quartier* – in what it *looked* like, as it were, when the “the people” was said to recreate the spaces it liberated. The same query drives them, in other words; they turn on the same anachronistic idiom. Yet they face the past not to describe it – “the people,” like the Republic, was a figure in ruin – but to piece together what was smashed. There is a modesty to Daumier’s pictures, a solemnity and sobriety to their vision of the Revolution. For even as they recycle the disabused tropes of February, they express none of the certainty, none of the triumphalism that made them, at first, such intoxicating signs of things to come, of a future whose *promesse de bonheur* had taken on the character of inevitability.

In a word: Daumier’s is not the vantage of a victor. He knew the June Days had gutted the language he was drawing on; the disenchantment and pessimism spreading across the Left could not be ignored. He returned to February anyway; and he did so unambiguously, insistently, defiantly, which is not to say, confidently or trenchantly or enthusiastically. Even if, that is, the lyric illusion of February had lost its valency, he seems to have thought that a meaningful response to the present situation lay embedded in its cardinal forms. So he reprised those forms, but not to transfigure them or to expose their lies and mystifications. There was no need to, nor any real gain to be had by turning over the ruins of the present for signs of salvation. These pictures refrain from pointing fingers; they do not vilify. The exigencies of defeat and failure rather than resentment ground their pivot. The Revolution, indeed, had once again been betrayed, but this time the pressing questions arising from the betrayal had less to do with outright theft than the nature of the victory itself. The Left, too, had to rethink its images, its ways of seeing and handling its relation to the past, to actual events that necessarily comprised *its* past; it had to ask itself when it was that it lost control of them completely. This need for reorientation appears, in part, to have been Daumier’s *point de repère*. The “revolutionary studies” resist being read as apologias or, in any straightforward sense, critiques; they are not quite for, not quite against. February emerges in them, rather, as a past charged with the here-and-now, the dream of happiness conceived as the experience of defeat. Their subject is greatness come to nothing.

It is for this reason that I want their conception, however provisional or preliminary, to have coincided with the onset of doubt and indecision. I see these three pictures, in other words, as attempts, by Daumier, to reconcile himself with the Republic, to come to grips with what it became at the end of June, with what it resembled now that thousands of its “children” lay in common graves, while thousands of others – those fortunate ones who had not been trotted out before the firing squads – were en route to New Caledonia or Belle-Île-en-mer. The dream of Reason had produced its monsters, and this was what the nightmare-world looked like, what a Republic that was also an

enemy looked like. I take the “revolutionary studies,” then, as efforts to claim a different kind of vantage, or rather to pause, even for a moment, to take measure of the past and its transfigurations before the irresistible force of reaction – so swift in its progress, so reckless in its destruction – buried them beneath piles of rubble. Even Tocqueville, no friend to the June rebels, no apologist for what he considered their abuse of freedom, trembled at the sight of “ce mouvement de retraite”: “Où,” he marvelled, “s’arrêtera-t-il?”⁷⁸ “Le passé n’éclairant plus l’avenir,” Tocqueville remarked elsewhere, “l’esprit marche dans les ténèbres.”⁷⁹ These words, written into the final pages of *De la démocratie en Amérique*, do little to conceal the despair that inspired them: they were meant to evoke the sense of tragic loss that accompanied the emergence of modern society, this new world for which a “nouvelle science de la politique” was needed. Daumier likely had not encountered them. But in the late summer of 1848, they could very well have been his. At least they seem to me to capture the key in which the “revolutionary studies” are painted – the kind of impulse, that is to say, that might lead one to dwell among the ruins of defeat.

The past could not be saved as a whole. But neither could it be disregarded, its meaning repressed (*refoulé*), rendered insensible, as it were, by the pitiless objectivity of sand. The break had nevertheless been made: the “thread of tradition” – call it the “revolutionary tradition,” or the “spell of the barricade” – could not be renewed. What remained was still the past, but a past bereft of consistency and continuity, a past that, as such, no longer retained its authority – “a fragmented past,” as Arendt puts it, “which [had] lost its certainty of evaluation.”⁸⁰ That is to say, the transmissibility of the past, whether, indeed, the past could still be active in the historical process, had come into doubt. After the collapse of tradition, the effects of which were irreversible, the past and one’s relation to it had to be approached in new ways; history had to be dealt with in new ways.

The question Daumier faced – it is the question I think the Phillips *L’Émeute* raises – was how deep the reconstruction had to go; or rather, from what vantage might the past, those elements of it still relevant and meaningful to the present, be seen anew. Was it possible, in other words, to re-establish a link with the past, not to resuscitate it as it was – no more, this, than to remain captive to the aroma of extinct times, *années essentielles* – but to reveal its lost potential, a weight and influence it had not had before? In short, could the past be recuperated negatively, as a “fragmented past,” outside the tradition that lent it coherence as it was handed down? Tocqueville considered any such effort “honnête” but “stérile.” The present state of society – “si nouveau, si confus” – could not be grasped, he maintained, “avec les idées qu’on a puisées dans celles qui ne sont plus”; knowledge of the new simply was not possible in the non-truths of the old. “Il est autre.” At the same time, he recognized that the world coming into being was still “à moitié engagé sous les débris du monde qui tomb[ait].” For Tocqueville, however, the present *engagement* of past and future spoke less of a relation or process of development

⁷⁸ Tocqueville, *Souvenirs*, p. 221.

⁷⁹ Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 452.

⁸⁰ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1978), p. 212.

than an entanglement of antinomies: the nexus of conflict could be clearly seen, definitively placed, but not, it would seem, transposed into meaningful expression. The past, “tous les biens et tous les maux qu’il portait avec lui,” appeared before him as a pile of insignificant rubble, ruins from which the criteria of action could no longer be drawn. Judgment of the present situation, to be just, had therefore to come from the heights of divine contemplation – the “point de vue de Dieu.”⁸¹ Daumier was not so sure. At least he was unwilling, for the time being, to survey the confusion from above.

The difficulty of the task lay in its execution, the contradiction any staging of transfiguration could neither escape nor hope to resolve. Fragmentation, in effect, had become the *conditio sine qua non* of the past; it could no longer be thought, much less reconstituted, as a totality. Recollection was possible, therefore, only insofar as it emerged from this state of discontinuity and estrangement, only insofar, in other words, as the past stood before the assaying mind’s eye as itself and *autre* at the same time. The past had to be seen, like Tocqueville said, as a sign of antinomy (not dialectic); it had to confront a present which claimed it as heritage. To put it another way: the past had to appear as it was; but for it to be itself – that is, for it to reveal its lost treasures, for it to be more than a mere semblance of what was no longer – it had to be liberated from its constitutive historical syntax, set at a remove, as it were, from the context that shaped its meaning, and that opened willy-nilly on to the present crisis. Actualizing the past in the present hinged on an “unhappy” play of identity and non-identity, the desire to unite the one with the other in order to destroy it, which is to say, in order to destroy what was already itself.

The terms of critical reappropriation were not altogether new to Daumier: the success of his caricatures, after all, turned on their ability to impersonate those they wished to annihilate – or as Baudelaire might have phrased it, on the caricaturist’s capacity for *dédoublement*, that is, to be simultaneously *soi* and *autre*.⁸² The dualism of caricature, as Baudelaire understood it, actualized the fallenness of modern man, expressing and exemplifying it at the same time; as such, it became the “source,” as Michèle Hannoosh points out, “of a peculiarly modern unity.”⁸³ Originating in the division of the comic self, this unity – it is a “wholeness” as it were without synthesis – “transcend[ed] dualism by entering fully into it, maintaining it in the extreme, demonstrating the limitations of the self and redefining it in its relation to others”;⁸⁴ it thereby summoned caricature’s audience, whose laughter “signal[ed] the breakdown of selfhood,” to do the same.⁸⁵ “Transcend,” of course, needs to be taken as relative: caricature, an essentially imitative more than creative practice in Baudelaire’s view, neither presupposed nor dreamt of “happiness”; it neither imagined nor imaged an escape from impurity. The technical as well as representational means caricature had at its disposal, to the contrary, rooted it in and bound it to the here-and-now of its making and consumption – as a temporal and historical orientation, but also as the material it worked, the content it figured. As a practice, then, caricature was inseparable from the context of

⁸¹ Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, pp. 451-455. Accordingly, Tocqueville titled the concluding chapter from which I have drawn these quotations “Vue générale du sujet.”

⁸² Baudelaire, “De l’essence du rire,” pp. 702-720.

⁸³ Hannoosh, p. 5.

⁸⁴ Hannoosh, p. 5.

⁸⁵ Sanyal, p. 42.

production, a limit condition whose determinations Baudelaire packed into the word *significatif*. Inasmuch as the *comique significatif* embodied the dividedness of modern humanity, enacting its own doubling in order to deprive its audience of “peace of mind,” it formulated a solution to the alienation of modern life by staging its own historicity *allegorically*. It prized the jolting force of incongruity, relying on the arrest of dialectics, the irreconcilability of opposites – being and appearance, past and future – within the totality of the image; at the same time, it traded in impermanence, the “flight of images” – *on ne dessine pas un mot, on dessine un geste, une expression* – rendering its marginality both signifiable and useful.⁸⁶ In short, caricature opened the point of entry into shared historical experience by effectively denying it unity.

Caricature was one thing, however. When Daumier stepped outside of its framework – the dreariness of *Rue Transnonain*, it seems to me, more than the reductions of *La République* or the self-awareness of his comments to Banville, makes this clear – he approached the allegorical dimensions of his practice with a heightened sense of trepidation; his hand grew heavy. The standoff actuating caricature’s *frisson* registered a different degree of danger: instead of mere emptiness (*ineptie*), a black hole. Worldliness itself seemed to be in jeopardy, not only as “the capacity to fabricate and create a world,” but also as the space and time in which the unthought, unspeakable, and invisible became active and signifiable, that is, in which they became public.⁸⁷ What shifted for Daumier, then, was the relation of representation to the political. Caricature’s necessary alignment with the consumption habits of society no longer seemed tractable. The things of the world had to be kept in place. The possibilities of sameness more than otherness therefore oriented his practice; in them, he seems to have thought, existed the means of safeguarding against the erosive elements of history those parts of the world on the verge of disappearing. Daumier no doubt would have admired Arendt’s proposition about works of art, that “they are the worldliest of all things.”⁸⁸ For not only had they ability to make non-worldly contents and concerns worldly realities; they could not be used up. His, in short, became an attempt to affirm the worldliness of that which was and those who were threatened with insignificance and, in so doing, to jam up, to slow down. Durability was what mattered to him.

I do not mean the line I have drawn between Daumier’s work in and outside of caricature to be absolute, or even firm. My aim has not been to coax the two representational “modes” into separating out. Real differences, to be sure, subsist between them, and we need to keep those dissimilarities in view; but we cannot – I do not believe Daumier ever did – make them into the petrified stuff of categories. They are, rather, signs of interplay, the dynamics of negotiation, the to-and-fro of persistence and uncertainty. The question of representation subtends them; the same presentiment, the possibility of fraudulence and travesty, engenders them. At times – in *L’Émeute* as in *Rue Transnonain* – the two “modes,” like Kafka’s past and future, clash; they become antagonists. Call the one “destroyer” and the other “preserver,” or “punisher” and “saver.” In these instances, the line between them becomes a battleground. For Baudelaire, indeed, it is the way in which a work like *Rue Transnonain* stands its ground in between, the way it gathers antagonistic forces together into its own image – its own

⁸⁶ “Flight of images” is Benjamin’s phrase (*The Arcades Project*, p. 325).

⁸⁷ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 206.

⁸⁸ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 206.

presence – that drives it beyond caricature *and* history in the ordinary sense. It struggles with both.

Perhaps I can put it this way: some version of the opening lines to *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* haunts Daumier's imagery. *Some* version, *some* comparable opposition of terms. I am concerned less, as it were, with the transferability of Marx's orienting concepts – tragedy and farce – than the operation he diagnoses, the treachery of a past transmitted as a tradition voided of substance, in which the authority it crystallizes no longer presents itself historically: “the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.”⁸⁹ That said, in the case of *L'Émeute*, Marx's terms *are* Daumier's terms. Here is the passage itself, boilerplate though it has become:

Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. Caussidière for Danton, Louis Blanc for Robespierre, the *Montagne* of 1848 to 1851 for the *Montagne* of 1793 to 1795, the Nephew for the Uncle. And the same caricature occurs in the circumstances attending the second edition of the eighteenth Brumaire!⁹⁰

Perhaps ironically, Marx's corrective occurred in *The 18th Brumaire* for the second time. The formula first appeared eight years earlier, in the 1844 manuscript “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's ‘Philosophy of Right.’” There, Marx adopts the language of aesthetics to characterize the nature of the German *ancien régime* and the conditions of its belated decline in the 1840s. The clarity of the initial account – it has few of the rhetorical flourishes that suffuse the later rendering – makes it instructive. I quote it more or less in full:

The struggle against the political present in Germany is the struggle against the past of the modern nations, who are still continually troubled by the reminiscences of this past. It is instructive for them to see the *ancien régime*, which experienced its moment of tragedy in their history, play its comic role as a German ghost. Its history was tragic so long as it was the privileged power in the world and freedom was a personal fancy; in short, so long as it believed, and necessarily so, in its own justification. So long as the *ancien régime*, as the existing world-order, struggled against a new world coming into existence, it was guilty of a world-historical, but not a personal, error. Its decline was, therefore, tragic.

⁸⁹ Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1994), p. 15.

⁹⁰ Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, p. 15.

The present German régime, on the other hand – an anachronism, a flagrant contradiction of universally recognized axioms, the nullity of the *ancien régime* revealed to the whole world – only imagines that it believes in itself, and asks that the world imagine this also. If it believed in its own nature, would it hide that nature under the appearance of an alien nature, and seek its preservation in hypocrisy and sophistry? The modern *ancien régime* is nothing but the humbug of a world order whose real heroes are dead. History is thorough, and passes through many phases when it conveys an old form to the grave. The final phase of a world-historical form is its comedy... Why does history proceed in this way? So that mankind will separate itself happily from its past.⁹¹

Tragedy turns on self-misunderstanding, farce on self-deception. Or as Benjamin once wrote, “everything depends on how one believes in one’s belief.”⁹² It was this “how” that, after June, left Daumier ill at ease; the Real appeared just as fallible – just as unconvincing – as the Imaginary. The revolutionary project had failed; about this he had no illusions. He understood the “thread of tradition” was irreparable, that the authority of the revolutionary past, taken historically, was irretrievable. Failure did not mean futility, however; that which had been wasted was not without worth. The question of believing, for Daumier, could not be asked without sadness. “The past [would find] its truth again only on the condition of negating it.”⁹³

With *L’Émeute* Daumier therefore entered the terrain of aporetic activity. Like caricature – and by caricature, here, I mean its allegorical rather than physiognomic character – *L’Émeute* had to devour its adversary, working to destroy the coherence of its image-world by incorporating it undialectically and thus by denying it the conceptual unity granted by instrumental reason – that is, by voiding it of intention. It had to plumb the depths of its pictorial language, as Benjamin says, by “drilling” rather than “excavating.”⁹⁴ At the same time, it had to ensure that the elements of the past it gathered to itself retained their conditioning power; otherwise, if they did not, they would be nothing more than “a heap of unrelated articles, a non-world.”⁹⁵ Authority itself, in other words, had to be refounded if the blind alley of the present was to be transformed into a new opening, a worldly space in which what had so far been left unthought and unseen

⁹¹ Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right’: Introduction,” in *Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right’*, ed. Joseph O’Malley, trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O’Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 134. I take the shift from “comedy” to “farce” to be a matter of precision rather than meaning.

⁹² Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin (1910-1940)*, eds. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 57.

⁹³ Giorgio Agamben, “The Melancholy Angel,” in *The Man without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 110.

⁹⁴ Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, p. 229.

⁹⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 9.

could emerge. In short, allegory is what *L'Émeute* had to be and what it had not to be. The picture's sense of the Revolution resides in the stalemate.

Nothing in *L'Émeute* speaks more directly, more agonizingly to its “unhappy consciousness” than the painting's build up of layers, which strive repeatedly, it seems to me, to lay the groundwork for belief, not just to know their object but to know it in the object itself;⁹⁶ in other words, to discover some way of figuring self-representation, of summoning the *émeutier* by his name. But these recursions – this work *L'Émeute* does as if in spite of itself – also become the condition of the painting's impasse, the problem it goes at and over with heartbreaking persistence. Look through the highlights, the black contours, the passages of muddied, gray pigment that weave over the one and under the other: the *émeutier* at the picture's center threatens to recede into the thick crowd of followers behind him, to become indistinguishable – a shape blocked in, there, even intelligible, but never much more than a Sign (a swatch of flesh-colored paint, one kind of hat or another, and so on). The painting's scumbling begins to insist on its brokenness; the reddish-brown of the underpainting becomes salient, the positive value, loosening the picture's hold on the world it envisions by activating painting's ground. The additions were necessary, then. Individually, layer by layer, they work to establish the revolutionary's presence. Only the layers never quite add up, they do not resolve. Take, for example, the highlights, which seem to bear no logical relation to the brilliant sunlight that illuminates the painting's inner half, the not quite near, not quite distant view of the urban environment: they insist on the revolutionary's appearance in this world over and against the coherence of illusion. The layers therefore perform a double task: they develop against the grain of presentation, interrupt it, and, at the same time, concentrate within themselves that which is presented. Each of them brings the *émeutier* closer to the picture plane, toward us, which is to say, against the left-to-right “flow of the scanning ‘narrative’ eye,” in fragments.⁹⁷ The conditions of his proximity are also the conditions of his *déception*.

I see no presage in *L'Émeute*, no reimagining of the future and its determinations, no signs, as it were, of the “not-yet-conscious” Ernst Bloch aligns with the impulse of hope. I cannot, with Adhémar, hear the blonde, hollow-eyed worker singing *La Marseillaise*.⁹⁸ Nor can I imagine the *canaille* he leads, *pace* Frank Jewett Mather, as “the mob of all times.”⁹⁹ The heedless paladin Duncan Phillips invokes gets closer, I think, to the painting's mood: “Blind to the immediate consequences of his words and acts, haunted by the future, he is the anonymous standard bearer of innumerable battles without name.”¹⁰⁰ As does Alexandre's demi-god: “The types of the figures in the throngs,” he reckons, “are curiously free from exaggeration, and yet are somehow

⁹⁶ Benjamin, “The Object: Triangle,” in *Selected Writings, Volume 1 (1913-1926)*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004), p. 90.

⁹⁷ I owe the phrasing to T. J. Clark.

⁹⁸ Adhémar, p. 36.

⁹⁹ Mather, “Painting from Dan to Beersheba,” *The Arts* vol. 2, no. 2 (February 1927): p. 78.

¹⁰⁰ Phillips, *The Nation's Great Paintings. Honoré Daumier: The Uprising* (New York: Twin Editions, n.d.).

unforgettable. At the head a fanatic advances, whose unreal beauty and false eloquence have drawn the somber crowd in his wake.”¹⁰¹ These are terms of praise, even if – perhaps especially if – they describe a madcap rabble-rouser in shirt-sleeves who “shouts violent words.”¹⁰² “As Delacroix expressed what we may call the lyrical side of revolution,” Alexandre goes on to say, “so Daumier has in this case...sculptured the features of a mob.”¹⁰³ An “avenging angel of the barricades,” this man, for Phillips as for Alexandre, has the Revolution both ways;¹⁰⁴ he is a fanatic but a *sublime* fanatic – a modern Prometheus. “The followers,” Phillips continues, “are like fluttering moths fatally attracted to the magnetic flame.”¹⁰⁵

What Phillips and Alexandre help us to see is the ambivalence built in to *L'Émeute* and its image of the Revolution. Only we have to read their descriptions against their grain, let their flurry of metaphors be muddled and contradictory, incapable, despite their concerted effort, to resolve this ambivalence by pinning *L'Émeute* down as a picture about authenticity. Or, better yet, we have to restore to the *dédoublement* on which their projections turn something of the Baudelairean temperament they seek to fend off: “*Prométhée délivré!* – l’humanité révoltée contre les fantômes! l’inventeur proscrit! la raison et la liberté criant: justice! Le poète” – Baudelaire’s target is Louis Ménard – “croit qu’elles obtiendront justice.”¹⁰⁶ Daumier – this is what Phillips and Alexandre point toward – placed trust in the forms available on the Left no more than those on the Right. These forms, after all, had become virtually indistinguishable. Yet Daumier’s project, as I see it, was exactly not to pry them apart, to readjust their alignment and affirm their difference, but to make the assimilation itself the matter. *L'Émeute*, I am suggesting, expresses the hopelessness of its situation; it acknowledges that the meaning of revolution is always tenuous, always potentially treacherous, that its representations are always at risk of crystallizing totalities and determinations no truer than those they seek to root out, of merely exchanging one phony symbol for another. Like Baudelaire’s laughing Sage, the picture proceeds only “en tremblant.”¹⁰⁷ Its despair is borne of a tomorrow no different from today, a tomorrow of continued bad faith – instead of Michelet’s “chaque époque rêve la suivante” something closer to Adorno’s “each epoch dreams of itself as annihilated by catastrophes.”¹⁰⁸

L'Émeute flirts with the danger of its presentism. It pulls away from the “magnetic flame,” faces away from the horizon, foregrounding that symbolic form which,

¹⁰¹ Alexandre, “An Unpublished Daumier,” *The Burlington Magazine* vol. 44, no. 252 (March 1924): p. 144.

¹⁰² Phillips.

¹⁰³ Alexandre, p. 144.

¹⁰⁴ Phillips.

¹⁰⁵ Phillips.

¹⁰⁶ Baudelaire, “Prométhée délivré par L. de Senneville,” in *Œuvres complètes*, p. 930.

¹⁰⁷ Baudelaire, “De l’essence du rire,” in *Œuvres complètes*, p. 703.

¹⁰⁸ Adorno, here responding to the 1935 version of “Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” took Michelet’s motto as the proposition around which the undialectical motifs in Benjamin’s theory of the dialectical image crystallized. He offered Benjamin this “corrective.” See “Exchange with Theodor W. Adorno on the Essay ‘Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century,’” in *Selected Writings Volume 3 (1935-1938)*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002), pp. 54-58.

at least since Géricault, coordinated heroic action with unattainability;¹⁰⁹ it turns that tragic figure around, locates it in painting's restrictedness. *L'Émeute* looks back toward us, into the darkness of the lived moment. Its revolutionary moves that way. Or rather, like the others in the front line he leans that way, all of them bent at the waist as if their inclined bodies had gotten away from legs we cannot see. Daumier adapted this strategy for reconciling absolute spatial proximity and on-going movement from *Famille sur la barricade*. The solution, it seems to me, was the principal lesson of that picture. Here was a way of reorienting *Une foule*, of turning it toward the painting's surface – indeed, of bringing the worker right up against the painting's surface – without sacrificing pictorial dynamism; here was a way of ridding *Une foule* of the final vestiges of readerliness. The green door in *Une foule* becomes, in *L'Émeute*, the picture plane; only this time there is no outside. The worker's gesture, a hand and arm which since David emblemized the Revolution's directedness, which Delacroix, too, turned toward the picture plane but whose relative distance and hence whose capacity for forward movement he maintained by casting it in uniform shadow, comes up against the painting's present-mindedness – its distrust of prefiguration, or what Bloch calls “anticipatory illumination.”¹¹⁰ Unlike its predecessors, this hand and arm moves nowhere else; it ends up seeming almost protective, a kind of shelter for the crowd. Blind to the future, *L'Émeute* risks full surrender to disillusion and melancholy, to its own “bleak wisdom”;¹¹¹ but better *that* danger, Daumier seems to say, better that risk and that clear sightedness than the false consolations of ideological and aesthetic redemption, of a history too sure of its direction. Better, that is, to look historical failure square in the face.

Once Daumier did turn his gaze toward the future, he saw a baleful world of refugees, families dispossessed of home and identity, their wandering one-way yet indeterminate, in a direction, as it were, without bearing. *Tout est perdu!* He saw his Republic among them: she trudges onward, almost dead center, in the relief version of *Les Fugitifs* (fig. 46), one child slung over her right shoulder, another clutching her left hand and leading the way, the third a few paces ahead. At the time, sculpture was not an unfamiliar practice for Daumier; he had been doing maquettes for his lithographs since the early 1830s and *Ratapoil*, his final word on the Republic's bipolarity, was in the making. Relief sculpture, however, remained untried ground. Small-scale portrait busts and statues were one thing, then; crafting a multi-figure relief was another. In relief, he had to feel his way.

¹⁰⁹ Michael Fried, “Thomas Couture and the Theatricalization of Action in 19th Century French Painting,” *Artforum* 8 (June 1970): esp. pp. 38-43; see also Grigsby, *Extremities*, p. 235.

¹¹⁰ “The answer to the aesthetic question about truth is that artistic illusion is generally not only mere illusion but one wrapped in images, a meaning that only portrays in images what can be carried on, where *the exaggeration and the telling of stories (Ausfabelung) represent an anticipatory illumination of reality circulating and signifying in the active present (Bewegt-Vorhandenen)*, in an anticipatory illumination, which portrays things in a specifically aesthetic immanent way.” Bloch, “The Artistic Illusion as the Visible Anticipatory Illumination,” p. 146.

¹¹¹ The phrase, Clark's, comes from “For a Left with No Future,” p. 67.

He repeated the exercise twice, in wax and in clay. Neither mold survives, and no one knows for sure which came first; all we have are the plaster casts Geoffroy Dechaume did sometime in the '60s or '70s and the bronze that eventually followed. Daumier's hand in the experiment concluded with the two prototypes; and indeed, they would prove the first and last of his forays in the technique. *Les Fugitifs* is something of a one-off, then, its medium particular to the fractured world it depicts and the halting procession of untouchables – “les panathénées de la Misère,” as Benoist puts it¹¹² – that lumbers, naked and faceless, across its shallow, blank field, neither its beginning nor its end – both lie somewhere beyond the relief's cropped edges – in view. The world of these refugees, it seems, had to be planar, a world in parallels. Daumier, it is true, revisited the subject several times over the next two decades, but when he did he painted it in oils and from a different vantage. When he did, he gave the roving hordes a setting – a rugged landscape, a dramatic depth of field, an atmosphere dense and heavy yet almost always alleviated by a parting of its charcoal clouds; he gave them clothing, horses and dogs, a diversity of movements, a first or last in line. The caravans in the oils move at oblique angles to the surface plane – the direction itself varies from picture to picture – rather than parallel to it, into and out of space rather than against it. The world, in them, is unquestionably hostile, its buffeting winds and desolate, craggy terrain manifestations of the disharmony between the refugees who traverse it and the substratum of their actions. Still, a feeling of resignation obtains: even if the direction they take betrays no meaning, it is a direction nonetheless. The stars continue to show the way, a way. The world of the oils, in short, may be inhospitable and alienating, it may imperil those made to roam its wilds, but it is neither savage nor predatory, neither intractable nor incoherent; it does not close in around them.

Les Fugitifs bears the scars of Daumier's shifting perception, its surface scored by sculptor's knife and comb, its massive forms plied into shape by indomitable frame and thick-set thumb. The relief has the look of something forged rather than modeled, and its figures, faceted and fragmentary, the uneven appearance of masses forcibly assembled, of bodies made rather than bodies realized: instead, that is, of the illusion of autonomous, self-actuating bodies, aggregates of painstaking gestures, of a plastic substance coaxed this way and that, this way *then* that, hewn here, sutured there. There is a discontinuity in Daumier's handling, an irregularity and dividedness in the execution, as if he had worked fitfully or by the piece. These refugees appear monumental nonetheless; they overcrowd the relief's modest dimensions – top to bottom, right to left. Yet theirs is an odd sort of monumentality, a monumentality of coarse and broken forms whose substantiality is confirmed not by the semblance of their integrity but by the network of fissures cutting through them. Daumier has left the ligature of these bodies fully in evidence. I do not get the sense, however, that he has done so to point up the fallibility of unified form. Daumier works hard, it seems to me, to keep these bodies together, to make the pieces, as it were, add up. The fissures matter, then, but as intervals; they signal, at once, the menace of disintegration and active resistance to it. It is the tension between the two states that seems to interest Daumier, what its momentary suspension might reveal about the human condition and what it might mean for those who, banished from civil society, must search for new grounds of human community as such, those to whom the public

¹¹² Benoist, *La sculpture romantique*, p. 206.

world – the world shaped by politics, which is to say the man-made world, the world, according to Arendt, that exists between those who hold it in common and, as such, relates and separates them at the same time – has been radically lost.¹¹³

Some of the refugees have been no more than blocked in, as if Daumier, on second thought, rubbed them down; they remain, nevertheless, but as partial figures, vestiges of bodily forms that bleed almost imperceptibly into the relief's roughened ground. The depth of this procession, it turns out, is as immeasurable as its breadth; the number of its members is unlimited.¹¹⁴ What matters nearly as much – it is the crucial difference between the oils and the relief – is the suggestion that the ground plane of *Les Fugitifs* has lost its relative neutrality, or rather its simple negativity. It erodes the titans who move across it and, along the way, the interspaces that enable us to stabilize the structural difference between figure and ground, supporter and container of meaning. Just look, for instance, at the Republic's sunken waist, how its flatness becomes a kind of pivot as her lower half pulls her inward while her upper half pulls away, or at the fragment of a man in front of her, one row in, who seems to dissolve before our eyes, the violence of his gradual dematerialization registered by the formless objectivity of the gouge marks that eat into his flesh. This kind of to-and-fro recurs, almost person to person, across the relief: body parts – heads, torsos, legs, feet – have gone missing. Put another way, then, the suggestion is that ground and figure might become indistinguishable, that the one might subsume the other, negate distinctness rather than verify it. Such an ambiguity, of course, is intrinsic to relief sculpture; and, in general, only the slightest indications of contrast and absence are needed to deactivate the threat of collapse. I do not pretend that *Les Fugitifs* denies us those *points de repère*; clearly it does not. What I believe it does do is locate the moment of danger by internalizing the precarious condition of its *dramatis personae*. The prominent ledge on which Daumier positions the row of refugees closest to the surface, perhaps more than any other detail in the relief, clarifies the stakes: it affirms salience as the mechanism of differentiation; yet it does so only at the expense of the continuity it ought to guarantee. The ledge, that is, secures a ground level; it promises these refugees a footing; it confirms their contact with the earth, as a space for movement and an *a priori* condition of human life. This ground level, however, is inconsistent with the ground plane perpendicular to which it has been built up. The two are joined, in other words, but do not coincide. Standing on the world, here, is not the same as being in it.

Devoid of signs that either a natural or a human world exists beyond it, yet marked by the traces of its manufacture, the relief's ground derogates its *raison d'être* and becomes, instead, something of a positive value, an obtrusive back wall that jostles the frieze-like procession that unfolds against it. In a word, the ground trespasses; but not, it seems, to introduce a set of counter-meanings, not to challenge the priority of the figure as what supports meaning. The ground is barren, its worked surface never coalescing into object or view, never discovering a world of places and things, a world in-between. It gives a presence – a materiality, an objectivity – to absence, to no-place and no-thing; and in turn, it enforces a kind of representational deadlock, a state of non-productivity and non-creativity. Not only, then, does the relief's ground deprive the

¹¹³ Arendt, "On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing," in *Men in Dark Times*, trans. Clara and Richard Winston (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1983), p. 13.

¹¹⁴ The nod to E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* is deliberate.

cortège of a place in the world; it renders the refugees who constitute it incapable of effective action, of realizing a world, any world, by appearing in it. Displacement, here, has a totalizing force (Arendt would say a de-politicizing force): it exposes these men, women, and children to the fate of human beings who, having lost their orientation in a world common to them and others, are nothing but human beings. Daumier's Republic consequently undergoes a transformation: she becomes Mother of Pariahs and Outlaws, Mother of a People, that is to say, unprotected by common right or political convention, those, in short, who seek their home but never find it, those for whom this seeking is their affliction. Deracinated, they live every tomorrow as they live today, their every step rendered heavy by the same burdensome thought: nothing new lies in wait; nothing new can be started. They move in permanence; yet the only place they go – the only place they dwell in – is nowhere.¹¹⁵ (*Les Fugitifs*, it could be said, shows us the verso of the lithographs with which Daumier greeted the Republic's arrival, *chez elle*, in March.)

Relief sculpture introduced Daumier to a different way of handling masses and, it would seem, a different range of tonalities. He made good on the lesson at once. Shortly after beginning work on *Les Fugitifs* – the timing, once again, can only be approximated – Daumier drew the *Émeute* now in the Ashmolean Museum (fig. 47), a work assumed to have been conceived, alongside *Camille Desmoulins au Palais-Royal* (fig. 48) and an inchoate *Scène de la Révolution* (fig. 49), as part of a project to illustrate Henri Martin's *Histoire de France*. The attribution remains uncertain, however. No documents concerning the project have survived, and the enterprise itself, probably due to insufficient resources, was abandoned sometime in the 1850s. The drawing, moreover, is widely believed to be unfinished, a general idea sketched in without the firmness of detail and color. Consequently, we have no means of knowing for sure which part of France's history *L'Émeute* is supposed to depict. In its present condition, it cannot be linked, like *Camille Desmoulins*, with a specific narrative or personality. Nor does it seem to conform to the cause-and-effect logic of *Annales*. The riot has neither name nor history, provides no signs of a *casus belli*, draws no clear distinction between “us” and “them,” victims and executioners; indeed, it seems to thwart the category of origin altogether. Alexandre, who bought the drawing from Mme. Daumier in 1891, listed it in his sale catalogue of 1903 simply as “composition dramatique”;¹¹⁶ ever since, it has gone by an array of competing titles: if not *L'Émeute*, then *Une barricade qui vient d'être atteinte*,

¹¹⁵ My thoughts on the relation between figure and ground as well as between ground plane and ground line are indebted to several sources: Michael Podro, *Depiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 29-59; Podro, *Manifold in Perception: Theories of Art from Kant to Hildebrand* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 80-91; Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 13-21; T. J. Clark, “Painting at Ground Level,” *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* vol. 24 (2004): pp. 131-172; Arendt, *The Human Condition*, esp. pp. 199-207; Arendt, “We Refugees,” in *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers in Exile*, ed. Marc Robinson (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. 110-119.

¹¹⁶ *Catalogue des tableaux modernes, aquarelles, pastels, dessins, sculptures, objets d'art, composant la collection de M. Arsène Alexandre* (Paris, 1903, #129).

La destruction de Sodome, or, most recently, *The Destruction of a City*.¹¹⁷ Laughton, perhaps rightly bypassing the problem of titles, suggests instead that we take it as a “universal allegory about the destructive forces of man”¹¹⁸ – a modern Dance of Death, as it were, only, we would have to add, autogenous and punitive and worldly, the End of Days realized as an act of autodestruction. These *émeutiers* appear to be victims of their own actions.¹¹⁹ In place of a parable, then, tragedy. Whether or not *L'Émeute* explicitly depicts a revolutionary scene seems to me of relatively minor importance; surely revolution – its violence and disorder, its way of distorting one's features, of making one's voice grow harsh – is the drawing's organizing point of reference.

Trawling the techniques of sculpture for fresh possibilities in drawing, as we have seen, had long since been a regular practice for Daumier. His *République*, no less than *Rue Transnonain*, owes a great deal to his engagements with them. Only this time relief sculpture rather than sculpture in the round – Préault, say, more than Michelangelo – led the way: instead, then, of massive forms shaped by broad lighting and deep shadows, both of them working to create a sense of solidity and volume, density and weight, both of them, moreover, in order and under control, forms cut into facets by hatched in shadows and gray wash, a surface wildly animated by a matrix of criss-crossing lines, bodies marked rather than modeled, their flesh scarred as if by the muscle, sinew, and bone beneath it, as if it were agony just to have a body, at least one of these bodies configured like so many puzzle pieces that do not quite line up. Certitude, the exemplary quality, according to Baudelaire, of Daumier's draftsmanship, is not something the Ashmolean *L'Émeute* – either its handling or its conception – evinces.¹²⁰ Look, for instance, at the man, just left of center, who turns back toward the crowd, an implausible arm – it is all bone and all rubber – thrown over his head; or the two grimacing heads – one at bottom, the other just right of center – that seem neither quite of the crowd nor apart from it, but appearing, as T. J. Clark notes, to fill in empty space;¹²¹ or the diagonal lines that rise up out of the throng yet describe nothing in particular, those closest to the picture plane smudged if not partially erased. These are results, no doubt, of trial and error, but also of indecision; their inscrutability evidences the sense of unease and unfamiliarity on which the image as a whole turns. *L'Émeute*, in other words, has the trappings of an experiment, an image whose conception appears to have coincided with its groping formation – in short, study and final draft in one. It grows on the page in faltering stages, alternating layers of charcoal, black chalk, gray or sepia wash, and white gouache, each of them revising and amplifying the last.¹²² Like *Les Fugitifs*, the Ashmolean *L'Émeute* has been built up, its image gradually discovered through the application and reapplication of marks and washes, in the to-and-fro of figuration and

¹¹⁷ *Une barricade qui vient d'être atteinte* is Adhémar's ("Les esquisses sur la Révolution de 1848," *Arts et Livres de Provence*, n. 8 (1948): pp. 42-45). The source of *La destruction de Sodome* remains uncertain, though, on the word of Percy Moore Turner, it is often thought to be Alexandre. Jon Whiteley lists the drawing as *The Destruction of a City* in his catalogue of the Ashmolean's drawings (*Catalogue of the Collection of Drawings*, vol. VII (French School) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 329-330).

¹¹⁸ Laughton, *The Drawings of Daumier and Millet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 49-50.

¹¹⁹ Werner Hofmann, *Daumier et l'Allemagne* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2005), p. 25.

¹²⁰ Baudelaire, "Quelques caricaturistes français," in *Œuvres complètes*, p. 733.

¹²¹ Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, p. 117.

¹²² See Laughton, *The Drawings of Daumier and Millet*, pp. 49-50.

obliteration, work and re-work. Here, however, the pull of disintegration looks to have been irresistible. It is the cataclysmic destruction of the world itself that we are made to see, the ground – a city, a road, the coherence of civil and social life – in the process of its annihilation.

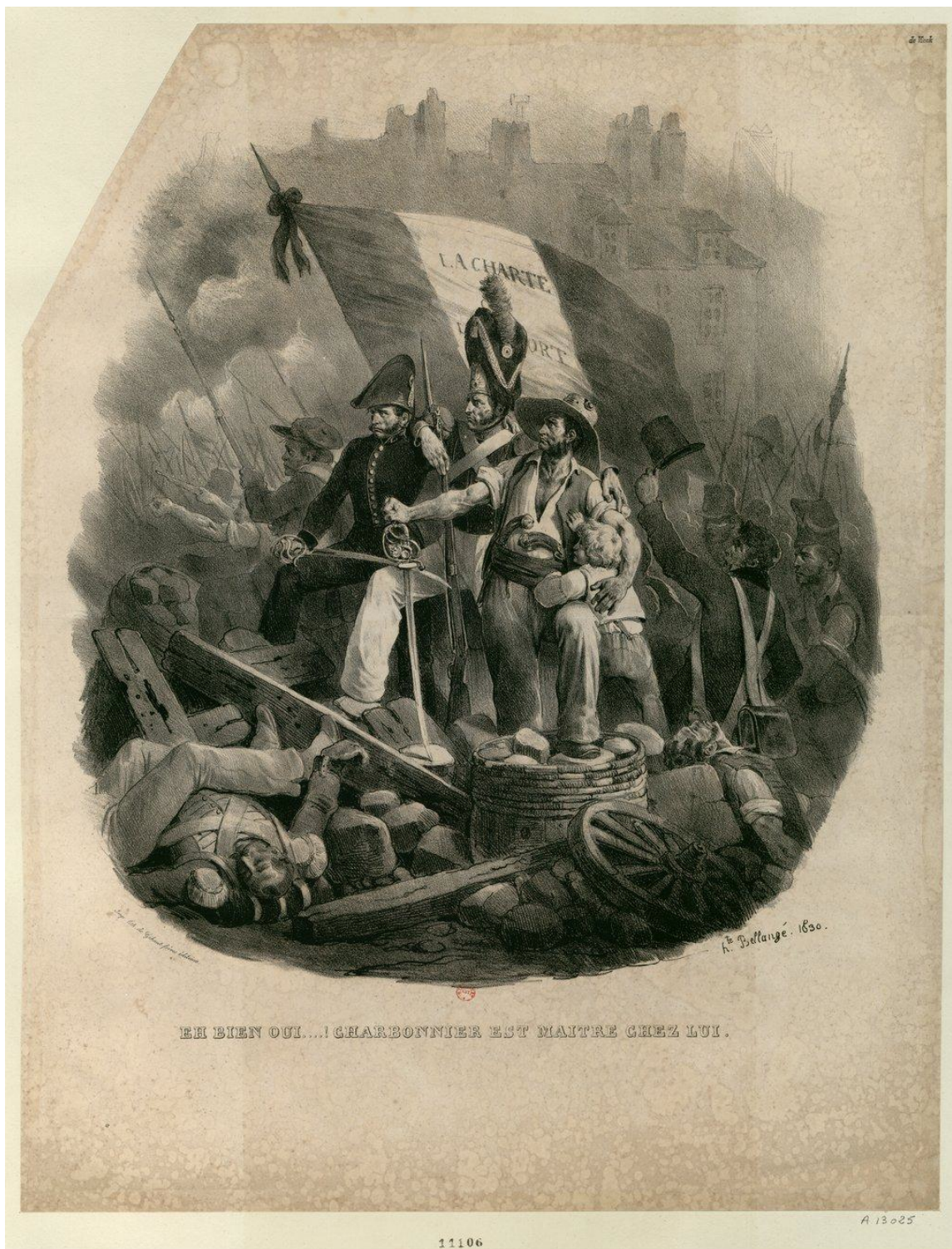
On one point art historians have tended to agree: there was no precedent for the Ashmolean *L'Émeute* in Daumier's *œuvre*. Insofar as the distinction pertains to the drawing's appearance, I am willing to take my place in line. Clearly Daumier has departed from old habits: the violence of both the drawing's handling and its image puts *L'Émeute* in previously uncharted, if not altogether alien territory – it was Préault's and, for a brief moment in the summer of 1848, it was Meissonier's. Till then, Daumier's vision of revolution, even in the dark days after April 1834, had nowhere ceded so much ground to despondency; nowhere, indeed, had revolution appeared so horrifying, so laden with doom, so bottom-heavy. The Ashmolean *L'Émeute* shows us what a revolution with no promise of a new beginning – a revolution, that is, with no future – might look like: above, a deserted cityscape in flames, hollowed out, a ruin in the making; below, a deadly crush, countless "révolutionnaires" stripped of clothing, their faces hardened into grotesque, otherworldly masks, their physical exertion extreme yet powerless against the crowd's inexorable momentum. The few who do resist the surge have been locked into one or another pose. These men – I see no women or children among them, no families or future generations, no one to remember – flee the cataclysm only, it seems, to descend toward the seventh circle of hell. Forward and downward, that is, have come to indicate the same direction, and downward looks to be the sole option; that climbing or being pulled up out of the swarm provides a temporary means of escape merely reaffirms the coercive authority of the cascade's descent. I have found no equivalent in Daumier's *œuvre* for the drawing's top-to-bottom organization, its division into registers stacked one on top of the other and pressing ever downward, its re-imagining of cardinal direction. Broadly speaking, the firmness of a ground level, a horizontal on which the living stand and the dead lie, determines the orientation of his compositions and affirms the inviolable order of the natural world. In the Ashmolean *L'Émeute*, that absoluteness, that limit condition of human action and therefore human world has become suspect. Daumier nowhere comes as close to Préault – to the groundlessness of *Tuerie* – as he does here; only replace Préault's spirited negativity with Daumier's downcast eyes.

Perhaps these men are the apostates of some secular Sodom, condemned by a vengeful Supreme Being for their willful disobedience; or perhaps, wishing to lay the foundations of kindness, they could not, as Brecht says of men in dark times, themselves be kind.¹²³ The picture does not let on. We may do well, in fact, to keep both scenarios in sight and in contact, to let the catastrophe of one illuminate the darkness in the other. Either way, my proposition holds: the Ashmolean *L'Émeute* takes a pessimistic view toward the Revolution – toward the "revolutionary tradition" – which, in the aftermath of June, forfeited its original validity and therefore its claim over the recent past. The drawing, that is to say, turns on disenchantment, demonstrating rather than impeding the

¹²³ "For we knew only too well:/Even the hatred of squalor/Makes the brow grow stern./Even anger against injustice/Makes the voice grow harsh. Alas, we/Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness/Could not ourselves be kind." Brecht, "To Posterity," in *Selected Poems*, trans. H. R. Hays (New York: Grove Press, 1959), p. 177.

dissolution of “revolution” and “progress” as a conceptual unity. Here, the dreamworld has gone bad; it leaves a history of disaster and suffering in its wake.

Daumier had grappled with the dangers of unfulfillment before; and he had endeavored, each time, to fend off the encroaching pessimism. The struggle is there in *Un héros de juillet* and *Rue Transnonain*; it is there in the lithographs of March and the “fugitives” that followed; it is there in Daumier’s determination to paint the Republic and his refusal to complete it. It is there in *Une foule*, *Famille sur la barricade*, and, perhaps most poignantly, the Phillips *L’Émeute*. The pivot of the Ashmolean *L’Émeute*, if not its handling, had deep roots: the threat of oblivion, the true horror for Daumier, remains constant throughout. Indeed, for him oblivion rather than atavism or inertia was the opposite of progress. Yet the handling is decisive. What distinguishes the Ashmolean *L’Émeute* is its melancholy touch. It mourns the passing of an idea.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 1. Hippolyte Bellangé, *Eh bien oui...! Charbonnier est maître chez lui*, 1830.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 2. Hippolyte Bellangé, *Seulement de l'eau rouge, la petite mère* (29 Juillet 1830), 1830.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

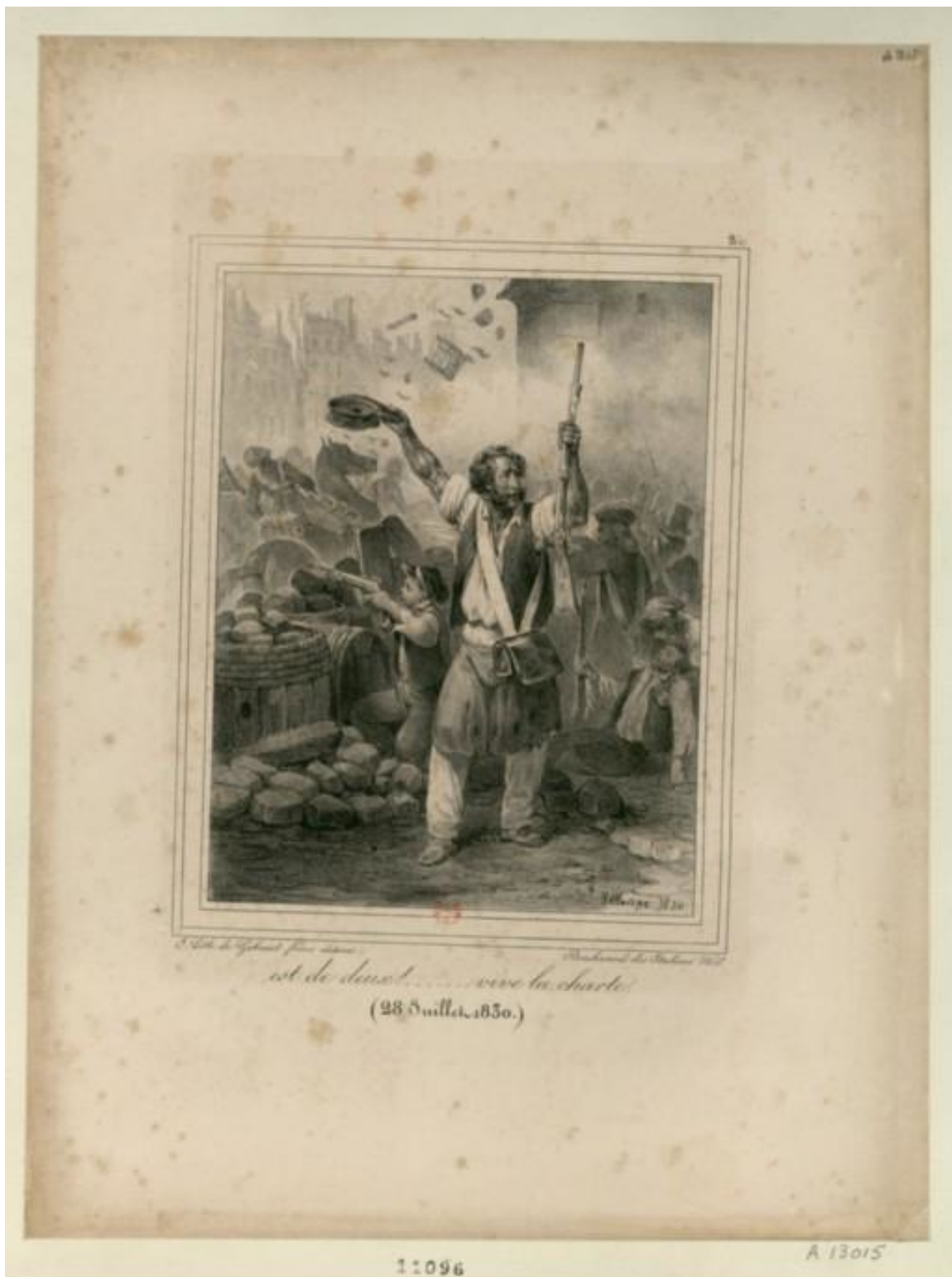
Figure 3. Auguste Raffet, *Tirez sur les chefs et les chevaux. Jeune gens... f..tez vous du reste* (28 Juillet 1830), 1830.



Figure 4. Jean Pierre Jazet, after Léon Cogniet, *Juillet 1830*, c. 1831.



Figure 5. Hippolyte Bellangé, *Eh ben, as tu touché Jean Louis? Ah dam j'scais pas... ma foi j'ai tiré dans l'tas* (28 Juillet 1830), 1830.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 6. Hippolyte Bellangé, *est de deux!...vive la charte* (28 Juillet 1830), 1830.



Paris, rue de la Harpe, vis à vis l'église.

(Scène de la Harpe)

Restaurateur-Mercier même rue

L'epicier qui n'était pas bête leur envoyait de la réplique qui n'était pas sucrée du tout.

(A)

(B)

REPC

Figure 7. Honoré Daumier, *L'epicier qui n'était pas bête...*, 1830.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 8. Nicolas-Toussaint Charlet, *L'Allocation (28 juillet 1830)*, 1830.



Figure 9. Philippe-Auguste Jeanron, *Les Petits patriotes*, 1831.



Figure 10. Eugène Delacroix, *Le 28 juillet 1830: la Liberté guidant le peuple*, 1831.



Figure 11. Joseph Beaume and Charles Mozin, *Attaque de l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris, le 28 juillet 1830*, 1831.



Figure 12. Hippolyte Lecomte, *Combat de la rue de Rohan, le 29 juillet 1830*, 1831.



Figure 13. Théodore Géricault, *Le Radeau de la Méduse*, 1819.



Figure 14. Auguste Préault, *Tuerie* (fragment épisodique d'un grand bas-relief), 1834/1851.



Figure 13. Caravaggio, *The Kiss of Judas*, c. 1602.



Figure 16. Anne-Louis Girodet, *Les ombres des héros français reçues par Ossian dans l'Elysée*, 1802.



Figure 17. Henri de Triqueti, *La Loi protectrice*, 1833-1834.



Figure 18. Henri de Triqueti, *La Loi vengeresse*, 1833-1834.



Figure 19. Antoine-Jean Gros, *La Bataille d'Eylau*, 1808.



Figure 20. Philippe-Auguste Jeanron, *Scène de Paris*, 1833.



FRAGMENT D'UN BAS-RELIEF.
par Aug. Prault

Figure 21. Jean Gigoux, Lithograph after *Tuerie*, 1834.

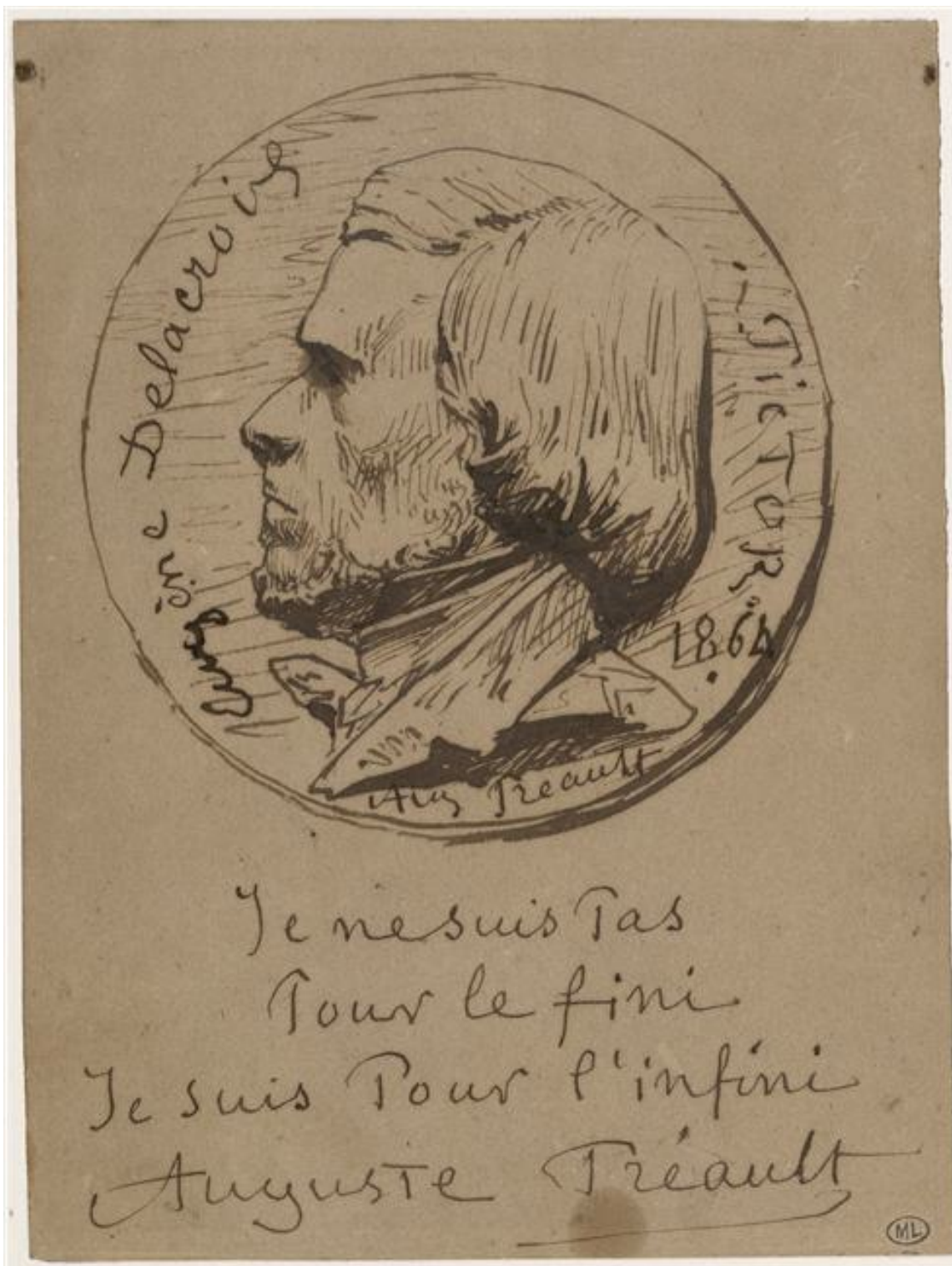


Figure 22. Auguste Préault, *Eugène Delacroix*, 1864.

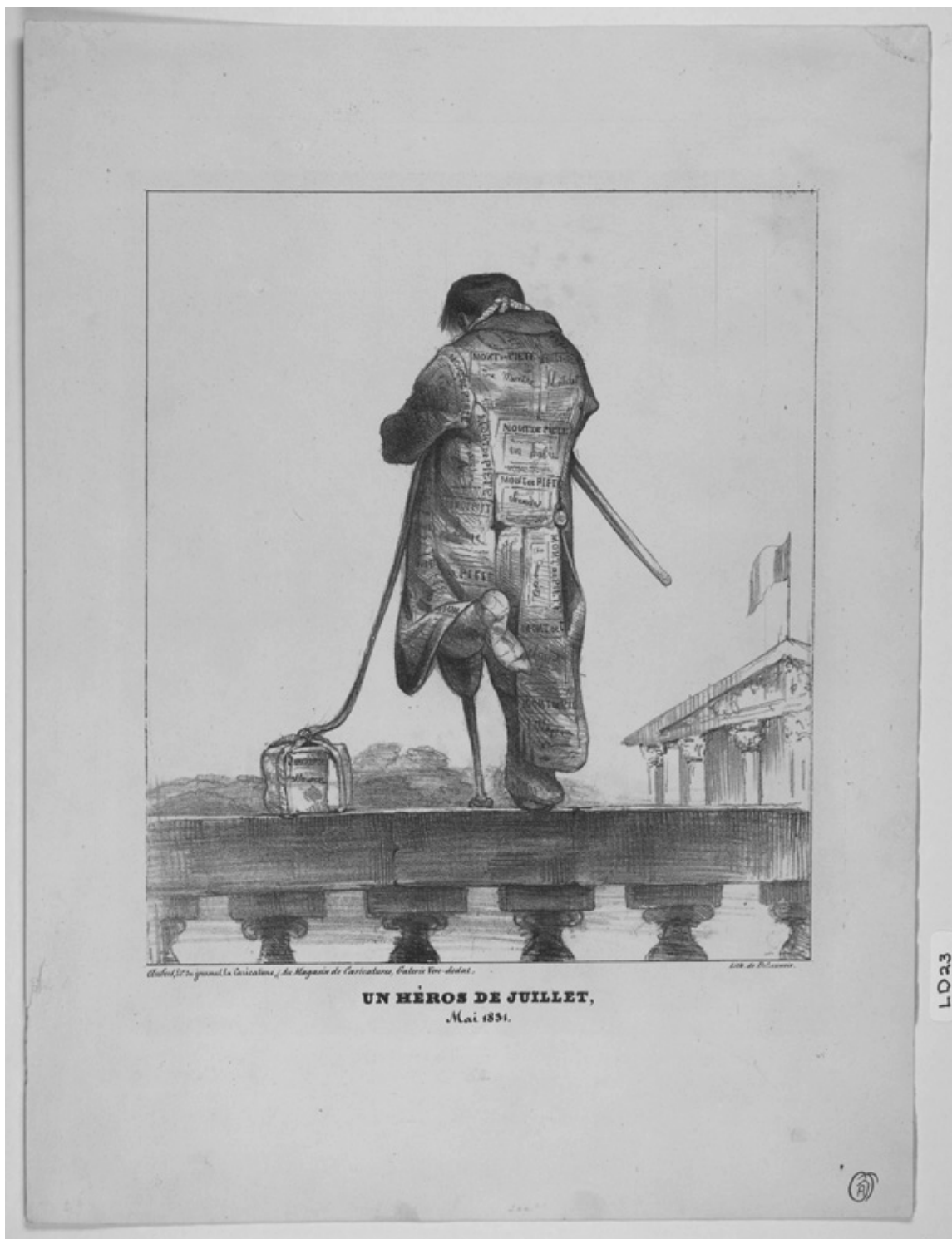


Figure 23. Honoré Daumier, *Un héros de juillet, mai 1831*, *Le Charivari*, Dec. 15, 1832.



Figure 24. Victor Schnetz, *Combat de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, le 28 juillet 1830*, 1833-1834.



Figure 25. Horace Vernet, *L'Arrivée du duc d'Orléans au Palais Royal, dans la soirée du 30 juillet 1830*, 1834.



Figure 26. Honoré Daumier, *Rue Transnonain, le 15 avril 1834*, *L'Association mensuelle lithographique*, October 1834.



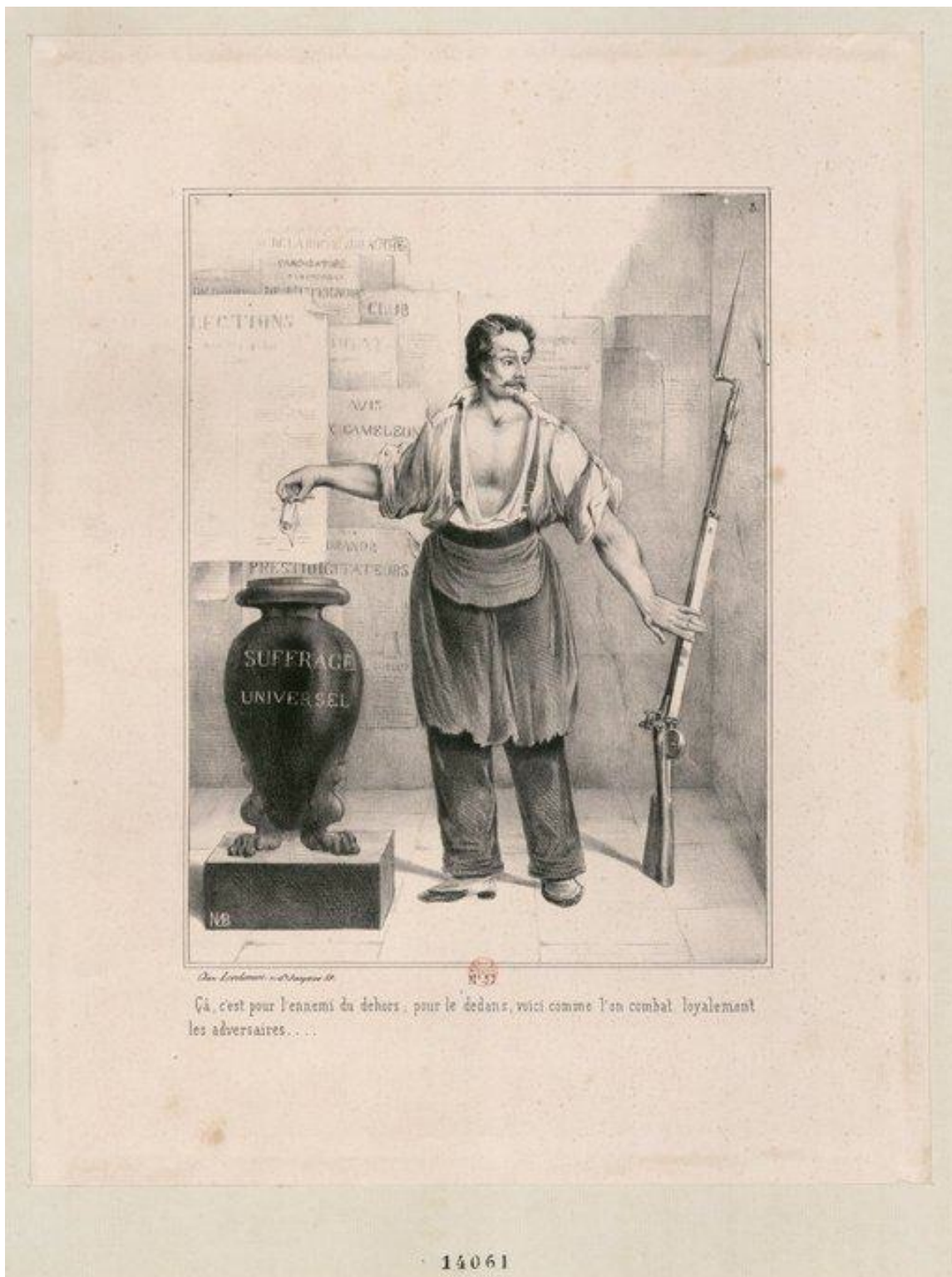
Figure 27. Ernest Meissonier, *Souvenir de guerre civile*, 1849-1850.



Figure 28. Édouard de Beaumont and Eugène Cicéri, *Barricade de la rue Clovis*, *Le Charivari*, August 7, 1848.



Figure 29. N.-E. Gabé, *Prise du Panthéon*, 1849.



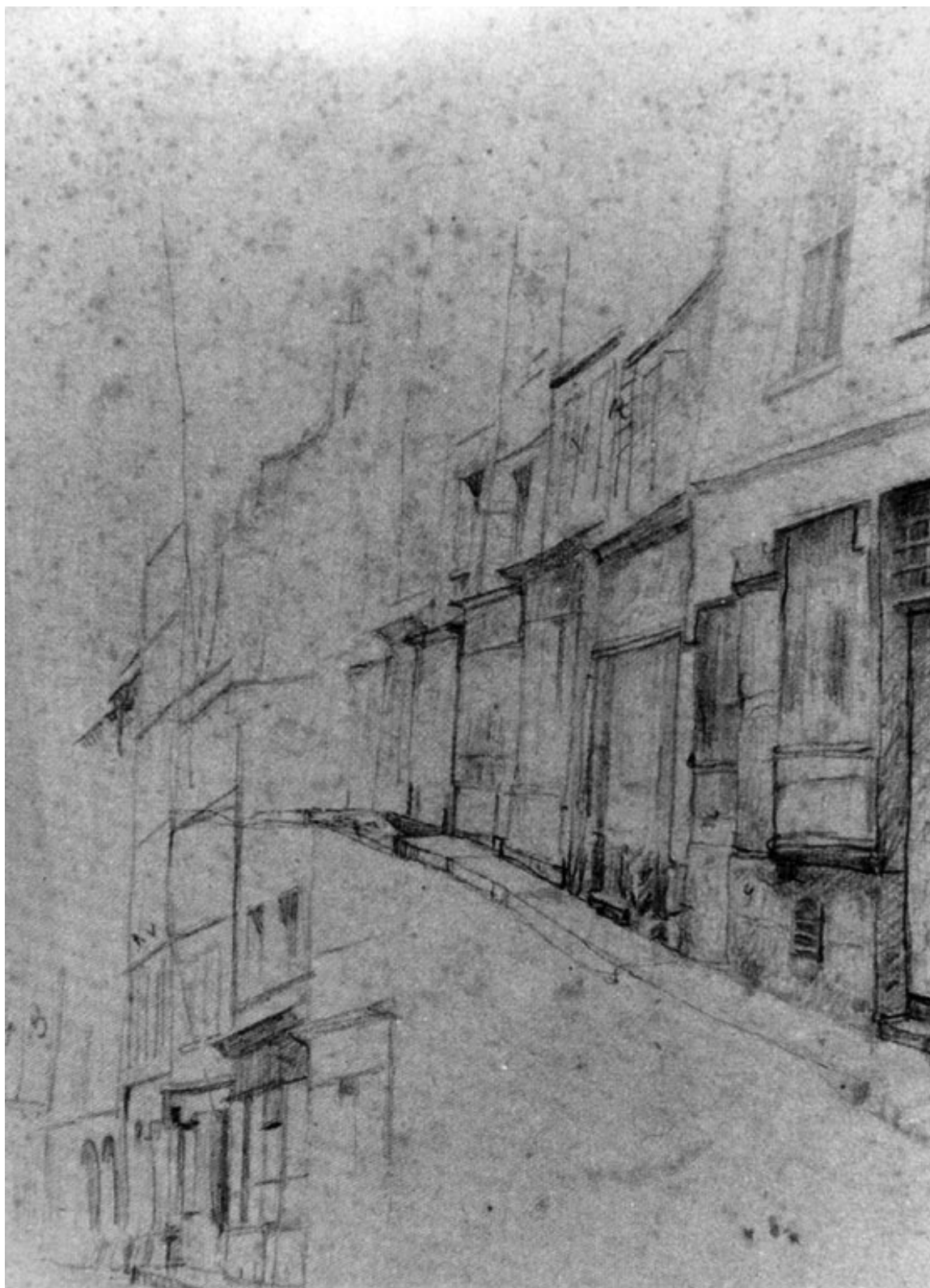
Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 30. M. L. Bosredon, *Ça c'est pour l'ennemi du dehors, pour le dedans, voici comment l'on combat loyalement les adversaires*, 1848.



Figure 31. Ernest Meissonier, *La Barricade*, 1848.





Figures 32-34. Ernest Meissonier, Studies for *Souvenir de guerre civile*, 1848-1850.



Figure 35. Honoré Daumier, *L'Émeute*, c. 1848-1852.



Figure 36. Honoré Daumier, *Ouvriers dans la rue*, c. 1846-48.



Figure 37. Honoré Daumier, *Le Meunier, son fils et l'âne*, 1849.



Figure 38. Honoré Daumier, *Le Gamin de Paris aux Tuileries*, *Le Charivari*, March 4, 1848.

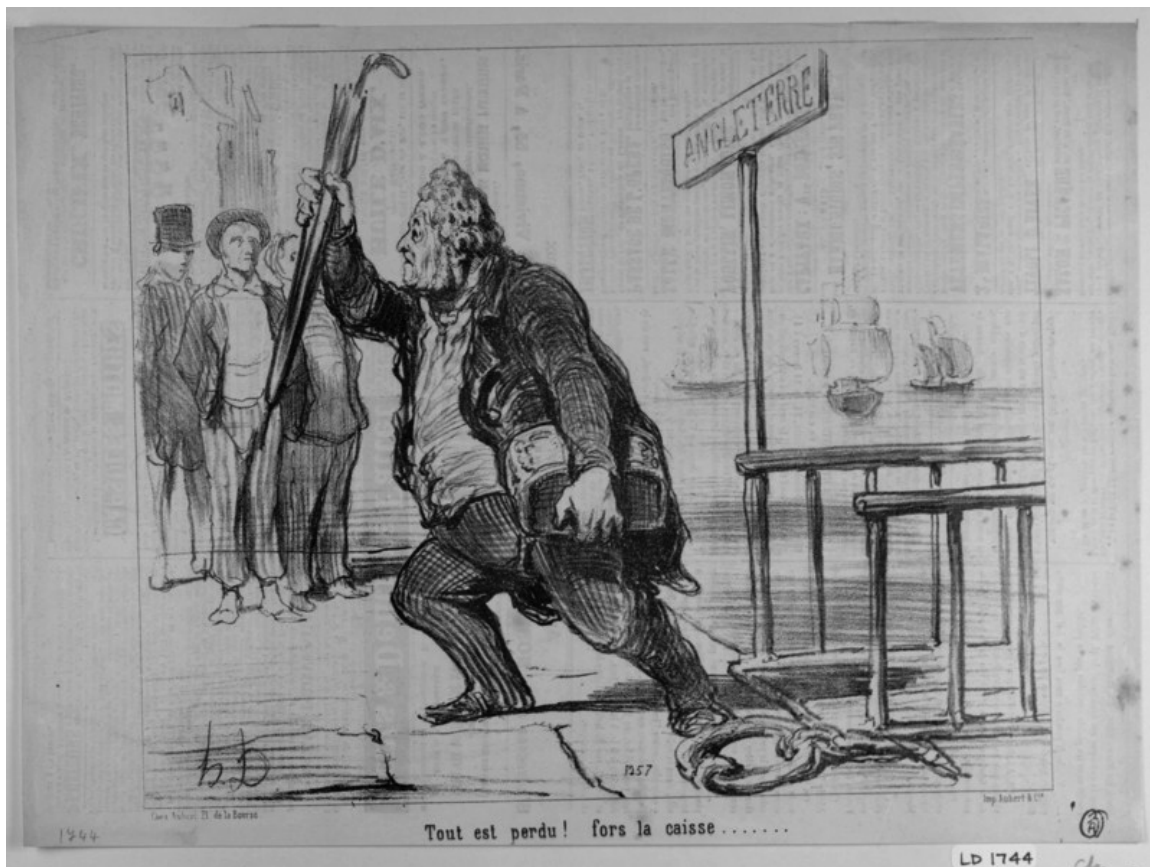


Figure 39. Honoré Daumier, *Tout est perdu! fors la caisse*, *Le Charivari*, March 7, 1848.



Figure 40. Honoré Daumier, *Dernier conseil des ex-ministres*, *Le Charivari*, March 9, 1848.



Figure 41. Honoré Daumier, *Projet d'une médaille*, *Le Charivari*, March 19, 1848.



Figure 42. Honoré Daumier, *La République*, 1848.



Figure 43. Andrea del Sarto, *Caritas*, 1518.



Figure 44. Honoré Daumier, *Une foule*, c. 1848.

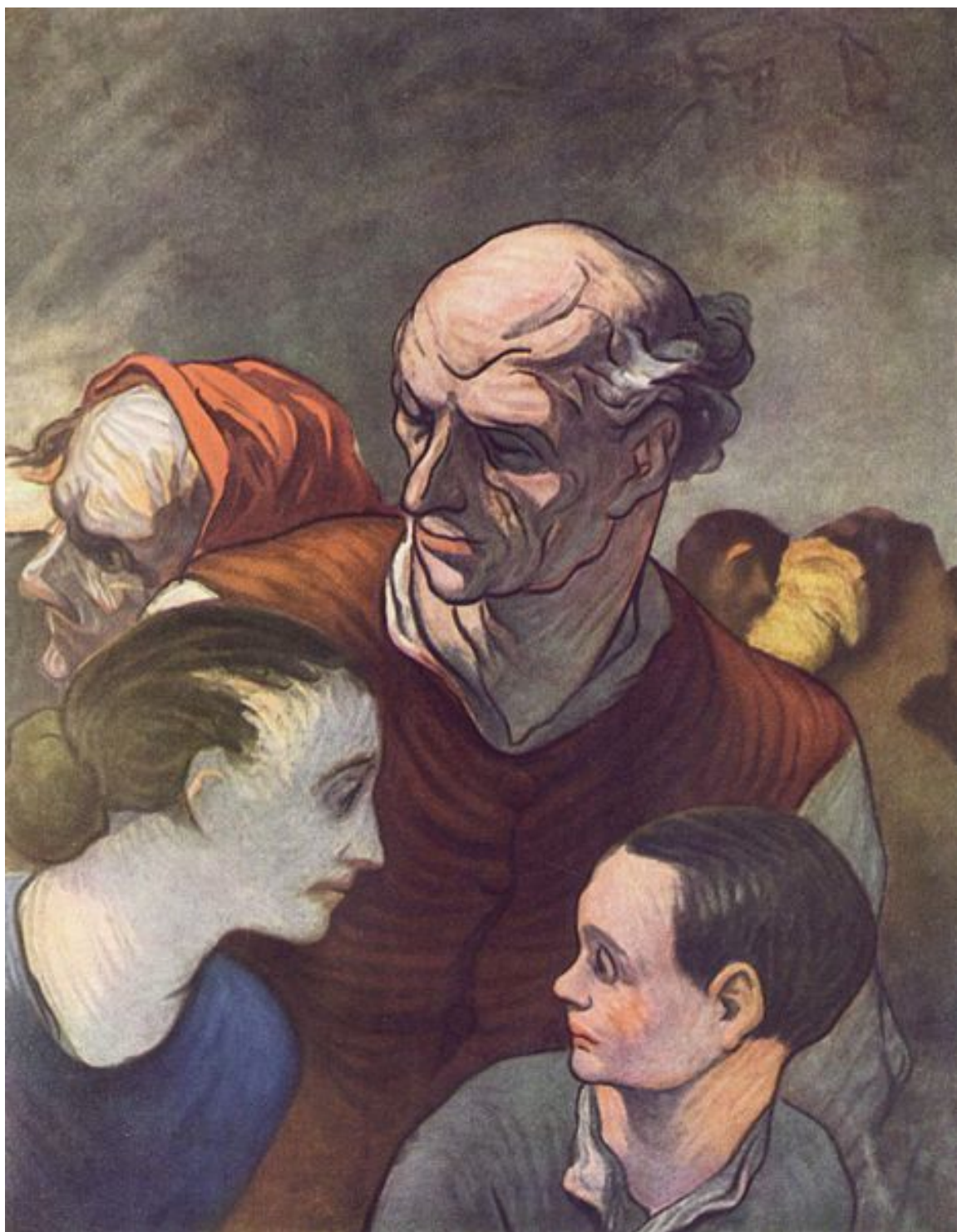


Figure 45. Honoré Daumier, *Famille sur la barricade*, c. 1848.



Figure 46. Honoré Daumier, *Les Fugitifs*, c. 1848/49.



Figure 47. Honoré Daumier, *L'Émeute*, c. 1848-1850.



Figure 48. Honoré Daumier, *Camille Desmoulins au Palais-Royal*, c. 1850.



Figure 49. Honoré Daumier, *Scène de la Révolution*, c. 1850.

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