



The huge gain from this commitment to scientific objectivity and the application of population-based and experimental data has come with a price. As Marshall Marinker comments, “The development of a pathological nosology generated the language which we use to describe what we see and, at the same time, excluded from the discourse those parts of the encounter between the doctor and his patient with which the new language could not deal” (p. 105).

A paradox lies at the root of modern medicine. The science of medicine is to discover generalizable truths that are demonstrable not in individuals but in groups; but the patient and his illness are unique. As Greenhalgh comments, conventional medical education has taught students to view “medicine as a science and the doctor as an impartial investigator who builds differential diagnoses like scientific theories” (p. 248). As Greenhalgh and Hurwitz argue in their intro-

ductory chapter, the skills gained in medical school are “eminently measurable but unavoidably reductionist” (p. 13). Once in practice, physicians rediscover what personal experience has already taught them: that everyone is different. Narrative-based medicine recognizes that doctors learn through an accumulation of patients’ stories. Although, as Jane Macnaughton cautions, “because of the haphazard nature of personal experience” we need to supplement anecdote with “other, more systematic, sources of evidence ... the centrality of the anecdote as a means to what physicians know should be recognised” (p. 204).

This recognition has been slow in coming and is difficult to express. Sometimes it seems as if evidence-based medicine is still too fragile to draw attention to its limitations. But voices, including our own,² are being raised. Evidence-based medicine is established strongly enough to withstand legitimate criticism.

In the 12th century the Jewish physician and philosopher Maimonides attempted to reconcile the science of Aristotle with the revealed truth of the Torah. In *Narrative Based Medicine* Greenhalgh and Hurwitz attempt to reconcile the generalizable truths of evidence-based medicine with the power of the complex and individual patient narrative. They have made an excellent start at a difficult task. We think that both Sir Austin and Maimonides would have approved.

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References

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Lifeworks

The social documentary of Daumier

This summer the National Gallery of Canada presents, after 11 years of planning, the first major retrospective exhibition of the works of Honoré

Daumier assembled since the artist’s death in 1879. The show comprises more than 300 works selected from Daumier’s prodigious output of litho-

graphs, drawings, woodcuts, paintings and sculptures produced over a span of 50 years. Daumier’s nearly 5000 satirical prints on the political and social issues of his time exert a presence even today, and physicians who enjoy contemplating their profession in the mirror of history might be disappointed that the exhibition does not include Daumier’s critique on the practice of medicine. On the other hand, there is plenty to consider with respect to the social conditions of nineteenth-century urban France. Daumier provides an encyclopedic proto-documentary ranging over topics as varied as educational reform, women’s emancipation (which he reviled), the professions, urban planning, public transport, the arts and the aftermath of war.

One of Daumier’s first political caricatures earned him six months in jail: this was his *Gargantua* (1831), which depicts King Louis-Philippe devouring baskets of money offered up by the starving masses while he excretes politi-



Honoré Daumier, *The Soup*, c.1862–1865. Charcoal, black chalk, pen and ink, wash, watercolour and conté crayon, 30.3 cm × 49.4 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris



cal favours on the sycophants clustered below. In this lithograph an emaciated woman with an infant at her breast is placed in visual and moral apposition in the bottom right-hand corner; it is tempting to read the recurring motif of breastfeeding in Daumier's work as a symbolic counterweight to the political nastiness of his time.

When in 1835 the French government suppressed political caricature Daumier confined his efforts to social satire. The lithograph *The Crinoline in Winter* (1858) obviously pokes fun at vanity, but it is not for nothing that the fashionable woman is contrasted by another who is elderly, working and poor. Elsewhere Daumier depicts a citizenry beleaguered by "progress." In the 1850s Emperor Louis-Napoléon commissioned Baron George-Eugène Haussmann to remodel Paris. This urban renewal posed problems familiar today: the displacement of the lower classes from the newly gentrified inner city and the eradication of a tangible history. In *Behold our Nuptial Chamber* (1853) an elderly bourgeois couple regards the ruins of their matrimonial home, now undergoing demolition. In the meantime, housing conditions left much to be desired; a lithograph entitled *One of the Disadvantages of Basements* (1856) depicts a married couple lying in bed in an apartment so damp that mushrooms have sprouted on the bedstead; all that is visible through their window is the feet of passers-by.

Running parallel to Daumier's trenchant satire is a sense of the dignity of family life and of work. In *The Soup* (c. 1862–1865) a working-class couple hastily eat their supper; the woman appears old and careworn but by no means frail, and her ample breast is well able to sustain the next generation. The laundress who climbs with her child from the bank of the Seine is rendered in a manner that makes her appear both monumental and tender: her heavy frame is bent with solicitude toward the child, whose safety in climbing the stairs she ensures. The family group crowded into the *Third-Class Carriage* (c. 1862–1865) maintains a rather tragic dignity; even in this very secular context Daumier in-



Honoré Daumier, *The Crinoline in Winter*, 1858. Lithograph, 26.1 cm × 22.1 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Honoré Daumier, *The Third Class Carriage*, c. 1862–1864, reworked in late 1860s. Oil on canvas, 67cm × 92 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

vokes universal themes of youth and experience, loss (where are the men?) and nurture.

Knowing Daumier mainly as a caricaturist, I went to the media preview expecting to be taxed by the exercise of



appreciating satire for which the topical references are now obscure. But it is impossible to encounter such a superbly gestural drawing style (one much admired by the Impressionists) and feel it as an academic exercise. Standing in the empty gallery after the tour had ended, I was surprised to realize how strongly I had been affected by Daumier's sentimental side. But I still doubted that I could forgive him the joke in one of his *Bluestocking* lithographs, which shows a woman "in a fever of composition" at her writing desk while her baby drowns in the bath.

Anne Marie Todkill
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Reference

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The Daumier exhibition continues in Ottawa until September 6, 1999. It will then travel to the Musée d'Orsay in Paris from October 5, 1999, to January 3, 2000, and to The Phillips Collection in Washington DC from February 19 to May 14, 2000.



RMN-Arnaudet

Honoré Daumier, *The Laundress*, c. 1860–1861. Oil on wood, 49 cm × 33.5 cm. Musée D'Orsay, Paris

Oh, I was there, too
(Swissair flight 111, Peggy's Cove, September 1998)

for Dr. John Butt

Among the things that startle
are a set of lungs
perfectly removed from a body,
such that their owner
could float along
and aspirate water yet
never taste burning salt,
the brine merely washing in and out
of that terrified O, a hole gushing fear,
in a palsy the signature of death.

Tourists gaped at the rescue effort,
gasping when helicopters would plunge
from inland to offshore
reclaiming bodies.
Their mouths would ape terrified O's,
murmuring while contemplating flowers littered on the rocks,
the scent of ocean stinging their exposed eyes,
breath taken shallowly
and not such a draught
of rarefied air
as must be in a pressurized cabin
the moment before framing the grimace
which would drink deep
and not taste.

I climbed nimbly over
ancient pathos and guilt
while gazing up at the sun
which rendered Icarus-like
a flaming airborne apparatus,
and I too vicariously followed helicopters out to sea,
then back again,
while others watched on,
some with salt-stained eyes
and terrible exhalations
of hot, painful air
rendered humid and filtered,
coming in jagged waves and
slowly I left that place
as if waking tenderly from
a salt-stained bed of Gothic rocks,
licking my lips as
local fishermen were interviewed
as authorities on this sort of thing,
everyone forming their words from a platform of open mouths
and those lungs again
drinking deep now

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