Fig. 180 **Louis Ferdinand von Rayski**, *Portrait of Count Zech-Burkersroda*, 1841. Oil on canvas, 57¼ × 40¾″. Galerie Neue Meister, Dresden.

be vastly diminished. Whether painting or photograph, whether created before or after 1839, both portraits belong to a genealogical table that mirrors the middle decades of the century.

This welling insistence on what appeared to be unadorned truth, but was actually the product of endless choices, can be found throughout mid-century portraiture, even in the domain of court portraits, as practiced, for instance, by the Dresden artist Louis Ferdinand von Rayski (1806–90). In his record of the thirty-six-year-old Count Zech-Burkersroda of 1841 (**fig. 180**), Rayski chooses to represent the chamberlain of the Saxon king, Friedrich Augustus II, not within the context of aristocratic artifice, inherited from a prerevolutionary world, but rather as an unpretentiously dressed man who stands before a monochrome background that in no way deflects our attention from his honest, matter-of-fact presence. Rayski had visited Paris during 1834–35, and was particularly drawn there to the broad, creamy brushwork of Géricault, which he has adapted here. Yet unlike Géricault, Rayski makes no effort to probe the mysteries of the individual psyche, leaving us a straightforward human document that is almost neutral in psychological character, a portrait whose very lack of artful, interpretative accents becomes a mark of a new, egalitarian realism, the equivalent of the many daguerreotype portraits of the 1840s.

Social Observers

In the eyes of many artists of the years 1830–48, the realities of particular people were quickly generalized to encompass a broader view of the new social strata that were taking shape. In this domain, it was Honoré Daumier (1808–79) whose spectrum of human and historical experience was the widest and whose contact with a mass audience was the most direct. Working within the medium of lithography as an illustrator for such new politically oriented periodicals as *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari* (founded, respectively, in 1830 and 1832) that chronicled the repressive activities of Louis-Philippe's government, Daumier drew everything there was to know about the facts of Parisian life, whether the corrupt and pompous behavior of judges and deputies, the public passions of women fighting for their emancipation in 1848, the laughable vanity of affluent Parisians posing for their daguerreotypes, or the tawdry spectacle of half-clad city dwellers in public baths. He flinched at nothing, even the brutal facts of war and death, but he could also laugh sympathetically at the foibles of his compatriots. A man of enormous moral conviction and one who, like David, was, in the French phrase, *engagé* (i.e., politically committed), he had actually been imprisoned in 1832 for six months for his mordant contributions to the growingly popular satirical imagery that could transform the new king into Gargantua, the monstrous glutton invented by Rabelais, or, in a more widely spread caricature (which even appeared in graffiti on Paris walls), a pear (which fruit the king's face resembled and which word, in French slang, also meant a dullard).

Even after release from jail, Daumier would not be censored. Labor conditions under the July Monarchy were no less wretched than elsewhere in Europe, especially among the silk weavers in Lyons, where a British investigator noted in 1834 that the average working day lasted sixteen to twenty hours. Already in 1831 in Lyons, the government suppressed, with twenty thousand troops, an armed uprising of workers who wanted to negotiate wage increases with their employers, after which a law of 1834 forbade any kind of unionization. The extensive week-long uprising that followed had the usual official repercussions in Paris (barricades were put up), as well as popular reprisals. On the night of April 14–15, a certain Lebrun kept shooting at soldiers from a window at 12 rue Transnonain and finally killed an officer. After this crime, soldiers forced their way into the building and, with bayonets and sabers, murdered

Fig. 181 **Honoré Daumier**, *Rue Transnonain, April 15, 1834*, 1834. Lithograph, 11½ ×17⅝". Albertina, Vienna.

eight men, a woman, and a child. It was this event, or rather its deathly aftermath, which Daumier recorded in a lithograph that all of Paris crowded to see when it was finally exhibited in a shopwindow in October of that year (**fig. 181**).

With the on-the-spot eye of a reporter, Daumier, like Goya before him, thrusts the spectator into the scene of death, insisting on the chaotic data of an overturned chair, of a mattress and pillow that might momentarily fall to the floor, of the indignities of a corpse whose nightshirt covers a large belly but exposes the legs. Yet if the first effect is of unedited, flashbulb truth, the second is of Daumier's selective genius in ordering this disorder into a working-class Pietà. Just as David ennobled the murdered Marat (see fig. 21), so too does Daumier lend an unexpected rhetoric to this heap of nameless corpses. The father, propped up on the sheets of the matrimonial bed in a postion that bitterly echoes many images of the Lamentation of Christ, is singled out by a strong white light, which also illuminates the infant, whose skull, still bleeding, has been bashed in. This gruesome family tree is then subtly extended in the shadowed and cropped figures at the left and right, a mother and grandparent, so that three generations have been symbolically annihilated by impersonal murderers who are represented only by their bloody footprints on the floor. Daumier's power here, as always, was to take the particular and the accidental, and somehow to elevate them to a statement that might immediately function as a political protest for any violation of the rights of common men, women, and children. What at first has the ring of arbitrary, brutal fact—a preview of documentary war photography—is edited and dramatized by an intuitive sense of major and minor, and by chiaroscuro contrasts of symbolic resonance.

Daumier's genius in translating great Western themes into contemporary realities could be used for both tragic and comic effect. Inevitably, the ideal realm of Greco-Roman myth and history, still propagated by artistic officialdom, would strike him as ever more ridiculous and anachronistic in the world of Louis-Philippe or Louis-François Bertin. Between 1841 and 1843 in *Le Charivari*, he published a series of fifty lithographs, *Histoire ancienne*, presenting hallowed classical themes updated to modern Paris. In one of these, *Penelope's Nights* (**fig. 182**), he shows us Homer's faithful wife at a handloom preposterously unlike those used by workers in France's industrial mills. Patiently weaving, night after night, in her gaslit tenement, and awaiting the return of her husband, Odysseus, she swoons like the heroine of a Romantic melodrama in a boulevard theater, inspired by the crude profile image of a helmeted head that recalls both classical legends about the primitive beginnings of the art of drawing and the childlike caricatural graffiti that so often carried obscene or politically inflammatory messages on Paris walls. All these brilliant disparities between official culture and the more sordid facts of modern life, between the ideal and the coarsely real, seem to be dashed off by Daumier with his usual economy, so that we end up relishing every detail, from the sandals to the voluptuously exposed shoulder, and registering every luminary contrast, from the white wall, with its minimal classical pilaster, to the gas flame that sputters against the blackest shadow. Not once, but hundreds of times, Daumier could pinpoint with the

Fig. 182 **Honoré Daumier**, *Penelope's Nights* (from *Histoire ancienne*), 1842. Lithograph, 9½ × 7½". Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

swiftest srokes not only the tragic and comic ways in which the lofty heritage of Western civilization was at odds with the modern world, but also the full panorama of the individuals who composed the same new society that Balzac was describing in the novels of changing Parisian life he subsumed under the title *La Comédie humaine* (1842–48). In fact, the analogy between Daumier's perceptions of contemporary people and those of his fellow novelists extends even across the Channel, where the British illustrator Phiz used a Daumier print of a smug old sick nurse as a model for the character of a midwife in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843). Luckily, Daumier lived beyond both the 1848 Revolution and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, continuing to provide, as we shall see, eyewitness accounts that cut right to the core of the mid-nineteenth-century life around him (see figs. 242 and 334).

Daumier was hardly alone in his role as both artist and social observer in the years before 1848. Of the many other Paris illustrators, Paul Gavarni (the pseudonym of Guillaume-Sulpice Chevalier, 1804–66), was his most distinguished contemporary, and one who also moved from highlife to lowlife, from fashion plates and opera boxes to scenes of urban misery. Even before his 1847–51 sojourn in London, where he became acutely aware, like Géricault before him (see fig. 116), of the pathos and horror of the modern city, he could comment in Paris on the heartrending breach between the rich and the poor. Using the lithographic medium favored by Daumier, he offered in his *Baliverneries parisiennes* (Parisian Nonsense) of 1846–47 glimpses of momentarily restrained class struggle. In one plate, titled *"Hunger? Laziness!"* (**fig. 183**), we can read on into the caption the soliloquized rationale that prevents the wealthy Parisian, with his cocked stovepipe hat, from letting his conscience prick him as he passes the starving beggar: "He's hungry? I'm hungry, too, but I take the trouble to go to dinner." Almost as concisely as Daumier, but still falling under his shadow, Gavarni instantly symbolizes two opposing social classes seen against a rapidly drawn vista of a narrow, picturesque Paris street that becomes, as in many of Daumier's images, a sign for the endless labyrinth of the entire city.

Fig. 183 **Paul Gavarni**, *"Hunger? Laziness!"* (from *Baliverneries parisiennes*), 1847. Lithograph, 7¾ × 6⅞". Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

For Daumier and Gavarni, lithographic illustration was the most effective medium to convey these social messages, and obviously the one that might achieve the widest distribution. But for other artists, in France and elsewhere, such comments on the burning questions of the times were phrased in more conventional pictorial language that smacked of the academy's rhetoric, a language that was by no means detrimental to the propagandistic effect. In *The Slave Trade* (**fig. 184**), a painting by Auguste-François Biard (1798–1882) that was shown at the 1835 Salon, the exoticism of Ingres's and Delacroix's voluptuous harem prisoners is transported to the shores of Africa, where we see an inventory of barbaric behavior by both black and white traders as they inspect, flog, chain, and brand their human merchandise. As an issue that could be as philosophical as Age of Enlightenment speculations on liberty or as venal as the insurance money collected by traders who lost human cargo at sea, slavery haunted the conscience of the nineteenth century; and many artists, from Blake and Girodet to Géricault and Turner, touched on this fearful moral theme. Biard's treatment of the subject has the flavor of neither a grandiose meditation on human iniquity nor a popular broadsheet against slavery. Instead, it combines the literal, documentary approach of its period with an old-master compositional order that would arrange this reportorial composite of horrifying truths into rhymed and interlocking figural groupings as graceful as those in Couture's *Romans of the Decadence* (see fig. 158). It was a formula that, since Copley's *Watson and the Shark* (see fig. 4), usually guaranteed success, and it is no surprise that the painting was later sent to London for viewing at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1840. As a British commentator of 1847 put it, Biard had "made the slave trade, by a single picture, more infamous than it had been depicted by a score of advocates for its suppression." Appropriately, Biard was later to celebrate, in a painting for the 1849 Salon, the official emancipation of the slaves by the law of the new French Republic of 1848.

The same mixture of journalistic awareness of the pressing social and economic problems that preceded the